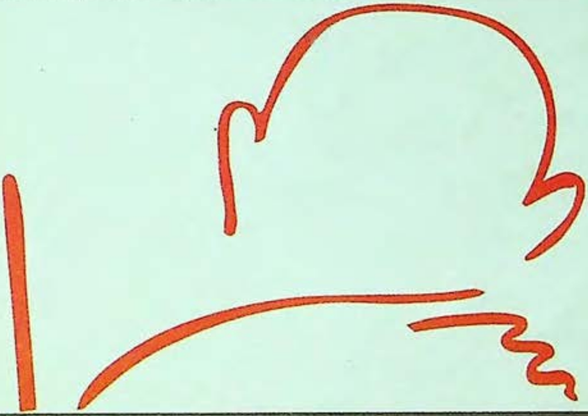
MEETING THE MAHATMA



Edited by
Jatindra K. Nayak

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Meeting the Mahatma

Gandhiji's Visits to Orissa

With a Foreword by Ramachandra Guha

Edited by
Jatindra K. Nayak

RUPANTAR

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

First published in India in 2006 by Rupantar: A Centre for Translation. L.D.Institute Campus, N6/ 470, I.R.C. Village, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Orissa

Website: www.rupantar.net
Email: rupantarorissa@yahoo.co.in

Introduction © Jatindra K. Nayak
Translation © Individual Translators

ISBN 81-901759-7-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the translators and the publisher.

Rupantar is a no-profit organisation committed to preserving and promoting cultural diversity through translation.

Cover Design: Digital Vision
Printed at Siksha Prakashani, Bhubaneswar

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Contents

Acknowledgements 7
Foreword 9
Introduction 11

Face to Face with Gandhiji 17
Ramadevi
Tr. Manmohan Choudhury

The Mahatma's Message 20
Narayana Birabara Samant
Tr. Priyambada Pal

A Train Journey Without a Ticket 24
Sridhar Das
Tr. Mary Mohanty

A Midnight Adventure 25
Banchhanidhi Pattanaik
Tr. Prajna Paramita Panigrahi

A Gift for Gandhi 28
Haricharan Giri
Tr. Jatindra K. Nayak

A Handful of Sand 29
Udaynath Sadangi
Tr. Prasanta K. Rath

Mahatma Gandhi, an Uncivilised Man 33
Chintamani Mishra
Tr. Akhtar. J. Khan

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

An Argument with Gandhi 35
Soilabala Das

My Idol 38
Sarala Devi
Tr. Sachidananda Mohanty

A Sketch of Gandhi 40
Frieda Hauswirth

Oranges for Gandhi 59
Banchhanidhi Pattanaik
Tr. Prajna Paramita Panigrahi

A Message from Gandhi 62
Gobinda Chandra Mishra
Tr. Sujit Mohapatra

Gandhi on Foot 65
Mirabehn

A Meeting in a Mango Grove 67
Artabandhu Mohanty
Tr. Supriya Kar

Gandhiji's March 68
Manmohan Choudhury
Tr. Bharati Mohapatra

A Lost Silver Coin 74
Krushna Chandra Kar
Tr. Priyambada Pal

Gandhi's March on Foot 80
Binod Kanungo
Tr. Arun Mohanty

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Lesson for Life 89
Binod Kanungo
Tr. Zehara Jabeen

Gandhi Darshan 93
Basanta Kumar Satpathy
Tr. Sumanyu Satpathy

A Hindi Teacher Meets Gandhi 99
Anusaya Prasad Pathak
Tr. Priyambada Pal

Love at First Sight 103
Annapurna Maharana
Tr. Supriya Kar

A Glimpse of the Mahatma 109
Kashinath Nayak
Tr. Deepak Champatiray

Gandhiji's Blessings 111
Nilamani Rautray
Tr. Mary Mohanty

Memories of Gandhi 113
Banka Bihari Das
Tr. Mary Mohanty

Victory to Gandhiji 116
Surendra Mohanty
Tr. Jatindra K. Nayak

A Note on Authors 120
A Note on Translators 123

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the authors and their family members, who have given me permission to translate and publish the excerpts featured in this collection. I acknowledge my indebtedness to Ramachandra Guha, eminent historian, who contributed a foreword to this book. I feel sincerely grateful to J.P.Das for his valuable suggestions. I take this opportunity to thank Ganeswar Mishra, Sangram Jena and Aurobindo Behera for their encouragement. Prasanta K. Rath and Subrat Rath, L.D. Institute, Bhubaneswar provided invaluable assistance right from the beginning. I record my deep obligation to Sikshasandhan for library support. I am also grateful to Asis Nanda and Manas Ranjan Pradhan for assistance with typing out the manuscript. Needless to say, for whatever errors and shortcomings there may be the editor is solely responsible.

Jatindra K. Nayak

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Foreword

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was by birth a Gujarati bania, but his appeal transcended the boundaries of caste, language, religion, and gender. He was a man who was trusted by women, a Hindu who reached out to befriend Muslims, and a savarna who fought for the rights of the lower castes. Above all, he was a Gujarati who was admired by Tamils, Malayalis, Andhras, Kannadigas, Maharashtrians, Hindiwallahs, Punjabis, Bengalis, Assamese, and, not least, Oriyas.

This book presents the recollections of a variety of people on Gandhi's visits to Orissa in the 1920s and 1930s. The reminscences come mostly from those who were themselves Oriya speaking; but there are two accounts also by European women who were with Gandhi when he came to visit the province.

Reading this anthology, I was struck by the respect and reverence commanded by Gandhi across different social classes. A group of students pawned a friend's gold chain to pay for the bus tickets that would allow them to get a glimpse of the Mahatma. Others walked miles and miles for the same privilege. A barber woman, asked to shave Gandhi, borrows fine jewellery so that she makes the proper impression on the divine being in human form.

The second thing that struck me was Gandhi's own commitment to the abolition of Untouchability. Everywhere he went in Orissa, he spoke out against a pernicious social practice that he regarded as a blot to Hinduism. He urged his upper caste audiences to eat with the lower castes, to help educate them, and to allow them into their temples.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The people walked miles to see Gandhi, and Gandhi walked miles to speak to them. This book recounts how he traversed through difficult terrain by foot, seeking to reach as many Oriyas as he could. He was man of indefatigable energy, with a physical strength that his slight frame belied. His readiness to endure hardship, and the simplicity of his life more generally, are certainly in striking contrast to the preferences of those who seek to speak for and represent the people of India at the present time.

Finally, I was also struck by the fact that Gandhi did not always bring around his audiences to his point of view. Many of those who attended his meetings simply came to have his *darshan*; they did not show the slightest interest in his social message. Others more actively opposed it. Thus the orthodox Hindus would not mix or mingle with Dalits, and excluded them from their schools and temples.

This fascinating anthology provides rich insights into the most interesting and influential Indian of modern times. I heartily commend it to the reader. I also hope that it will inspire scholars in other parts of India to collect, edit and translate recollections of Gandhi written by men and women of their state or province.

Ramachandra Guha

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Introduction

Between 1921 and 1946, Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa seven times. In fact, he chose to begin his celebrated march on foot for Harijans in Orissa. These visits and their electrifying impact on people in Orissa have been meticulously documented by biographers, scholars, historians, and participants in the freedom struggle themselves. Notable among these are Binod Kanungo's *Bapujinka Utkalare Padayatra* (1950) and Pabak Kanungo's *Orissa and Gandhi* (1999). The latter contains a lot of valuable material relating to Gandhi's seven visits to Orissa in the form of newspaper reports, photographs, poems and personal narratives, and vividly conveys to readers an idea of a world awakening to Gandhian protest.

The focus of the present anthology is, however, much narrower. The anthology confines itself to personal narratives relating to Gandhi's visits to Orissa. Most of these have been written by people who came merely to have a glimpse of Gandhi and record a memorable moment in their lives. Others have been written by people who got an opportunity to interact with the Mahatma during his stay in Orissa. An account by Mirabehn, a close associate of Gandhi and another written by Frieda Hauswirth, the Swiss German wife of an Oriya sugar technologist, have also been included. Taken together, these make us aware of the way ordinary men and women tried to make sense of one of the most enigmatic and fascinating figures in human history and the way he touched their lives. They recreate the drama, the excitement as well as the monotony of these journeys in a way official documents scholarly treatises or journalistic accounts simply cannot do. This accounts for their special value and significance. They also combine to provide a kaleidoscopic perspective on a major historical shift: the emergence of India from the grip of empire.

A majority of the narratives centre on two visits: the one Gandhi paid to Orissa in 1921, and the other Gandhi undertook in 1934.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhi's first visit to Orissa in 1921 constitutes a dramatic turning point in the history of the freedom struggle in Orissa. It drew a generation of young men and women into the non-cooperation movement and altered the courses of their lives forever. In popular consciousness, it established Gandhi as a semi-divine being, a *messiah*. Handfuls of the sand of river Katjuri, on which Gandhi had addressed a mammoth public meeting, were collected by people who adored him. However, the picture shifts when one looks at the group of narratives dealing with Gandhi's march on foot undertaken in 1934. The response to him becomes complex and ambivalent, often degenerating into unconcealed hostility, and one gets the impression of the enormity of the task Gandhi had set himself, the resistance to change deeply embedded in the society he was trying so hard to transform. It is in Orissa that a shocked Mahatma discovered that untouchables themselves practice forms of untouchability. One also gets acquainted with the potent political idiom Gandhi had evolved to reach out to the poor and the dispossessed and to even those bitterly opposed to him.

There are times when one feels that words played little role in the communication that took place between Gandhi and the thousands who braved the displeasure of the British and came to see him. The narratives included here provide several instances of people feeling utterly contented with a mere glimpse of the Mahatma. Their experience often borders on the mystical. And yet, during his many visits to Orissa, Gandhi did not always receive blind adoration. On occasions, protesters waved black flags at him bluntly expressing their total lack of faith in his social vision and political ideals. He had to cope with hurdles placed before him by a petty-minded colonial bureaucracy. In the midst of all this, however, he raised funds, made sure a Hindi teacher received his salary, sorted out practical problems, kept a close a watch on the way accounts were kept, and found time to play with children and cut jokes.

The excerpts featured in this anthology not only illuminate aspects of the many-faceted personality of Gandhi, they make us aware of the depth of the impact he left on people who saw and listened to him and came in direct contact with him. Their accounts of meeting the Mahatma take us a step closer to an intimate history of the freedom struggle in India.

Jatindra K. Nayak

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

*   *   *

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the workings of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition.

Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

'A very great man' I have called him. He is likely to be the greatest of our century. Lenin is sometimes bracketed with him, but Lenin's kingdom was of this world, and we do not know yet what the world will do with it. Gandhi's was not. Though he impinged upon events and influenced politics, he had his roots outside time, and drew strength thence. He is with the founders of religion, whether he founds a religion or not. He is with the great artists, though art was not his medium. He is with all men and women who have sought something in life that is neither chaos nor mechanism, who have not confused happiness with possessiveness, or victory with success, and who have believed in love.

E. M. Forster, *A Tribute to Gandhi*

*   *   *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

MEETING THE MAHATMA
Gandhiji's Visits to Orissa

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Face to Face with Gandhiji

Ramadevi

Tr. Manmohan Choudhury

Three or four days after submitting his resignation, Gopa babu started visiting the Swarajya Ashram. By that time it had become known that Gandhiji was coming to Cuttack. There was fresh surge of excitement and enthusiasm among the workers and volunteers. New people were coming in large numbers to the Ashram to join the movement. Atalda, Dr Atalbihari Acharya looked after them. Atalda was a soft spoken man. But he was an out and out revolutionary. He had been associated with the terrorist movement when he was studying medicine in Calcutta. There was picture of goddess Kali on a wall of the room of the students' hostel in which he was staying. Every one thought that Atalda was a devotee of the goddess. One day the police searched his room as they suspected him. They searched the place thoroughly, but did not touch the picture of Kali out of a sense of reverence. Atalda had hidden his revolver behind it.

Atalda gave up terrorism and joined the non-cooperation movement and became very active in it. There was a time when no one cared or dared to attend public meetings or join demonstrations organized by Congress. On those occasions there would be Atalda alone tramping the streets with the national tricolour on his shoulder. He would go to the sands of the Katjuri River, plant the flag there and have his say even if there was none to listen to him. Gandhiji arrived in Cuttack on Dola purnima, the full moon day in March on which the Holi festival begins. Everyone was bursting with

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

enthusiasm and jubilation on the day. So many things had to be done and all were so busy that none cared to stop for a breather. There was to be a women's meeting at a place called Binod Bihari on that day at two in the afternoon. Mother-in-law took it for granted that I would attend the meeting. So she asked me to finish the housework early and offered to look after the kids while I attended the meeting. A public meeting was to be held in the evening on the riverbed. She also guessed that I would want to go and sit on the embankment to listen to the speeches. So she also directed me to finish everything in time so that there remained nothing to be done in the evening in the kitchen. I went to Benod Behari at noon. The hall in which the image of goddess Durga is worshipped during the Puja holidays had been dusted and scrubbed clean and carpets had been spread on the floor for the audience to sit on. It occurred to me that a song would be appropriate to begin the meeting. At that moment Hiranyamayee Devi, wife of Prof. Mohini Mohan Senapati, arrived there. We were great friends and she agreed to sing as soon as I broached the idea to her, but she needed a harmonium. There was not much time to lose. Haïmavati Devi, who had her home in the same compound, immediately had one fetched. As the time of Gandhiji's arrival drew near, the audience became more quiet and solemn. There were some forty of us women. Soon we could hear slogans being shouted outside and Gandhiji, accompanied by Kasturba and Devdas Gandhi, entered the hall. There were some other people also with them. Gandhiji made a very short speech. In it he exhorted women to give up wearing ornaments and donate the same to him. Some also made cash donations. I had taken with me a bank of yarn spun on that rickety spinning wheel from Satyabhamapur. Mother-in-law had warned me not to give any ornaments to Gandhiji even if he came to ask for them. As usual I heeded her advice and did not donate any of my ornaments. I handed over to him the bank of yarn and he looked at me, a look that had something in it that makes me remember it even today.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Thus I had a glimpse of Gandhiji. Mother-in-law also was eager to see him but was keeping her wish to herself. At the time of the public meeting in the evening she came with me to the embankment herself instead of deputing Bamididi to accompany me. In those days there were no public address systems, so we could not hear anything. We could only fulfill our desire to have a *darshan* of Gandhiji and Kasturba.

The days from April 6 to 13 were to be observed as the National Week. There was to be fasting on the first and the last days with only one light meal in the evening. There was to be a hartal with all shops and offices closed for the day. None had ever heard of such things before. All these were novel ideas. The volunteers went round the town and persuaded the shopkeepers to down their shutters. The hartal was a grand success. Gopa babu and I fasted. Mother-in-law was perplexed. We were going on a fast and yet were not caring for the traditional rules about the kind of food to be taken on such a day. We took our usual food in the evening. There were no religious ceremonies to be gone through. It pleased me much as it perplexed my mother-in-law that one just sat down to eat when the fast ended without having to go through all sorts of ritual offering of food to the deity and so on. Others did not have to be on tenterhooks all the time to ensure that coming into contact with cooked parboiled rice, for instance, did not inadvertently pollute our food. I felt an inner peace at the thought that our fast was not causing any anxiety to anybody. I spent quite a lot of time that day spinning. The wheel and the slivers were no good. I was also quite unskilled. So the output was small.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The Mahatma's Message

Narayan Birabar Samanta

Tr. Priyambada Pal

The activities of volunteers during the *Dola* festival had brought the banks of the moon-lit river Katjuri to life. The whole city had become full of bustle as Mahatmaji was to arrive by an express train the next morning. We went and assembled at the Swaraj Ashram in the evening. After midnight a procession led by Sri Jadumani Mangaraj started from the Ashram. Almost five hundred volunteers; Hindus and Muslims, marched past the station slowly. The army of men reached their destination in the night bathed in moon beams shouting slogans such as 'Bande Mataram', 'Alla ho Akbar', and 'Hail the Mahatma' and took their positions to maintain discipline at the railway station. Around four o' clock it was found that the crowd had grown uncontrollable. One cannot form an idea of the size of this huge crowd without seeing it with one's own eyes. The building terraces, tree-tops, roads – every place in the area between the station and the Ranihaat bridge – was occupied by people. How could five hundred volunteers control the chaos created by them? They seemed utterly inadequate in the face of the immense crowd. All stood helplessly waiting for the imminent crisis to unfold. A mishap was sure to happen.

The express train arrived at the station, which was resounding with the slogan, 'Hail the Mahatma'. From a third-class compartment disembarked the great soul of India, Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi. His clothing included a cap and an ordinary looking kurta. The excited crowd had crossed the danger limit a long while ago. Utter chaos

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

was expected to overwhelm us every moment. The order imposed by the volunteers, the police and the railway officials had already disappeared. But when this great soul crossed the railway platform greeting the crowd with a smile, a sense of discipline automatically descended on the crowd. Mesmerised by the Mahatma, the crowd stood still like mannequins. This self-control displayed by the crowd indicated our national character. This capacity for self-control enabled the people of Orissa to maintain a special emotional bond with Mahatma Gandhi for ever.

The first meeting of that day was held in the afternoon among the Muslims in the premises of Kadamrasul. Issues such as national resolutions taken condemning the brutal behaviour of the British government towards Khilaphat activists, the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity in the struggle for independence were discussed thoroughly with the Muslims present there. The sense of devotion which Dr. Ekram Rasul succeeded in arousing in the hearts of Muslims of Orissa towards the Congress continued to animate them till the last battle of the independence struggle was fought. The bloody conflicts, which later erupted in the border-areas, especially in the neighbouring state of Bengal, had no impact on Orissa.

A huge meeting was organized on the sands of river Katjuri on this memorable day. During the First World War, the cooperation extended by India to the British was rewarded by brutality in Punjab. Thus, there was no way left for India other than non-cooperation as a means of achieving independence. Gandhiji's speech on this issue was a moving one. When he urged the students to leave the educational institutions, one of the members of Cuttack Brahmo Samaj, Mr. Lal Mohan Chatterjee asked, 'How could Gandhiji describe the western education to be useless while he himself has received it, and which has given us a great leader like him?' No sooner had he finished saying this than Gandhiji said, 'Great men like Buddha, Chaitanya and Shankara were strangers to this western education. See how insignificant I am compared to them. I think I

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

would have become much better if I had not received this education.' The learned audience, who were present in great numbers in that meeting, seemed immensely satisfied with the answer.

Another meeting was held at night for Swaraj Ashram workers in the Ashram premises. It was pointed out there that the British had occupied India on the strength of the greatness of their civilization rather than the power of arms. How can we conquer them without having an equally great civilization? Gandhiji said, 'Western civilization can never become an ideal for us as it exploits others for its survival. The British are a small race. In order to sustain its civilization it is bound to subjugate a big market like India. When we become self-sufficient after independence, the British, who are dependent upon us, would dwindle, if not perish altogether. If a huge country like India imitates a civilization like that, there is no doubt that the entire world would not suffice as a market. Thus, British civilization is more harmful for us than British rule.' Gandhiji said that his speech contained the answers to the questions put by the workers and explained convincingly how *charkhas* would make us a self-sufficient civilization. He pointed out that the use of *charkhas* is necessary to stop Indians from growing fond of the luxury-loving western society.

The work of making *charkhas* had started in the Swaraj Ashram. The workers of the Ashram received training in carding cotton from Gobind Mishra (who became an M.P. later) of Dasapalla, who had undergone training in this at the Sabarmati Ashram. That day I promised to myself that I would learn to use *charkha* after Gandhiji left Orissa.

The next meeting was held at the Badadanda in Puri. Brahmagiri was worst hit by the floods in 1920. This area had been devastated by a famine, though the government had not officially recognized it as a famine-stricken area. While explaining the Nagpur proposal at Badadanda, Gandhiji appealed to the citizens of India to join Congress and contribute to the Tilak-Swaraj fund. Hundreds of

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

thousands of famine-stricken, half-naked, emaciated people came forward and lovingly gifted a *paise* or an *anna*, which they had tied in the end border of the rags they had wrapped around their bodies. Gandhiji got so moved by this gesture that he took an oath there to put on loin-clothes like these people for the rest of his life as a representative of the poor of Brahmagiri. Gandhiji directed the volunteers to work in rural areas instead of towns because the future of India lay in its villages. He said that every Swaraj worker should work towards making the rural people fearless in the fight against social injustices such as exploitation and rape. Those who have already taken such an oath have no doubt done the right thing.

When Gandhiji's tour came to an end I chose Kujang as my place of work, where lay the estate of my father. Although a transformation had taken place in my character while working with the Congress for six months, it was only skin-deep. I got the opportunity to change myself from within only in the villages by working among the innocent people there.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Train Journey without a Ticket

Sridhar Das

Tr. Mary Mohanty

It was the Dola holdidays in 1921. I was at home. There I heard that Mahatma Gandhi would be on his tour to Orissa. A meeting would be held at Sakhigopal and Mahatma Gandhi would address the meeting. By that time Mahatma Gandhi had occupied the place of a god in our eyes. How could one resist the desire to see him with one's own eyes and listen to his words? Walking about thirty-five miles, I reached Sakhigopal. The meeting was held. Mahatma would speak in Hindi; I feared that I would not be able to understand anything. But the Hindi which he spoke was not at all difficult on my part to follow.

Besides, Gopabandhu translated his lecture into Oriya. Mahatmaji left for Puri from Satyabadi. That day Sakhigopal station teemed with people. I left for Puri by the same train. Like hundreds of other passengers that day, I too did not purchase a ticket.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Midnight Adventure

Banchhanidhi Pattanaik
Tr. Prajna Paramita Panigrahi

Mahatma Gandhi toured the entire country to spread the message of non-cooperation. Our high-school examination was scheduled to begin on 31st March 1921. On 19th March, on his way to Madras, Mahatma Gandhi was to pass through Berhampur. Mrutunjaya and I decided to see Mahatma Gandhi. However, we worried about whether we would be able to return on the day of our examination after seeing him. Many students also desired to join us. Everyone dissuaded us from going. Around midnight, we decided to take a break after working at our studies. We came out and saw many students of the neighbouring mess were getting ready to visit Berhampur to see Gandhiji. What could we do? In those days, only one bus used to leave from Rasulkonda to Berhampur and return on the same day. If the bus that left on the morning could find thirty passengers, it would leave a bit earlier than usual. We grew impatient. But how can we arrange the bus fare? Raghunath Sahu of our class was sitting there. He was wearing a gold chain. When our eyes fell on it, we asked him for it. He tore the chain from his neck. We got his chain all right, but who would give money in exchange of it at midnight? We went to the market, the chain in hand. A hotelier was counting his day's earning, sitting by the entrance, the door of which lay ajar. We mortgaged the chain to him and he lent us fifteen rupees. Raghunath, Mrutunjaya and I now got ready to set off for Berhampur. My uncle, Sri Durga Madhav Pattnaik was then undergoing teacher's training programme. With great diffidence, we approached and told

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

him of our planned visit. But why should he stop us? In fact, he, too, wanted to join us, but he didn't have much money either. Pattam Surapatra of Belaguntha lent him some money. We reached Berhampur railway station at 4 A.M. A little while later the train pulled into the station. A huge crowd had assembled to welcome Gandhiji. Gandhiji's motorcar could not move even an inch in the press of the people. Standing on the footrest of the vehicle, the sub-collector, Mr. Dinabandhu Pal, tried to control the public. But no one bothered to listen to him. In the end, the crowd let the motorcar move forward only after Gandhiji stood up and motioned to the people to do so. The sub-collector felt relieved. Mahatmaji stayed in Madhumandir, which was the residence of Madhusudan Panigrahi, an advocate. A lot of people had assembled in front of the advocate's house to catch a glimpse of Gandhiji. He stood on the verandah of the first floor of the house and greeted everyone with folded hands.

A grand meeting was organized in Barakas maidan at four in the afternoon.

A few tables were placed close together to form a raised platform, and Mahatma Gandhi sat on it. By his side, was seated the great leader of Orissa, Pandit Gopabandhu Das. The meeting began. There were no loudspeakers those days. To many, Mahatma Gandhi's feeble voice was not audible. Every now and then, rumblings within the crowd would disrupt the speech. Pandit Gopabandhu Das would rise to his feet and calm the crowd by addressing them in a loud voice. Those days, Gandhiji dressed himself in a typical Gujrati attire—a dhoti, a panjabi and a turban. A small piece of cloth lay on his shoulder. On the other hand, Gopabandhu babu sported a big black beard and had put on dhoti and a kurta. This was the first time I saw him. Everybody left after the meeting. Now we had to worry about how we would return the same night and sit for the exam the next morning. Our task was to find thirty passengers for the bus. Saukat Ali, Mohammad Ali and Lala Lajpat Rai were to visit Berhampur the next day. Though our fellow students very much

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

wanted to see them, they had to come back with us. We reached Rasulkonda at dawn. We lay in bed for hardly three, four hours and our friends woke us up. How could they find out about our visit to Berhampur? After lunch, we went to the examination hall at 10 A.M. We felt extremely sleepy. Those days our examination was held in two sittings a day and was spread over three consecutive days. I had always secured the first position in every examination, in every class, up to this time. But now I wondered if I would pass the examination at all. But I stopped worrying, for the time being.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Gift for Gandhi

Haricharan Giri
Tr. Jatindra K. Nayak

Mahatma Gandhi made his first visit to Orissa in response to Pandit Gopabandhu's invitation. It had been decided to hold a meeting in the field in front of Barabati fort in Cuttack. In order to prevent Congress from holding a meeting, the police had imposed section 144 in Cuttack. This left leaders of Orissa terribly worried. But Pandit Gopabandhu thought out a clever plan and organised a meeting on the sands of the Katjuri which lay outside the purview of section 144. In an hour's time all arrangements for holding the meeting were finished. The meeting began at the appointed time, i.e. at four in the afternoon. Thousands of people assembled on the sands under the open sky.

While Gandhi was addressing the people, the police got someone to throw a torn winnowing fan into the middle of the audience. Someone remarked loudly that this was a gift for Gandhi. At the end of the meeting, Gopabandhu suggested that the winnowing fan be auctioned off. Bidders were invited to make offers. A gentleman immediately made the highest bid, paid out twenty rupees and took the winnowing fan.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Handful of Sand

Udaynath Sadangi
Tr. Prasanta K. Rath

At that time *The Samaj*, which is the premier daily Oriya newspaper these days, was being published as a weekly. When I went to the residence of the Sub-Registrar, I came across the weekly *Samaj* and chanced upon a news item written in bold letters both in English and Oriya, saying, 'Mahatma Gandhi is going to visit Orissa and will reach Cuttack on the 23rd March.'

At that time, the Dola Melan festival was being celebrated in the vast open space in front of the house of Durga Charan Mohapatra, a landlord. A huge crowd had gathered there. When I reached there, I got a handbill containing the detailed programme of the Orissa tour of Mahatma Gandhi. He was to arrive on the 23rd of March. The next morning, I set out for Cuttack without informing anybody at home. I had acted on an impulse. I had absolutely no idea about how far Cuttack was from home, about when I should start and where I should stay at Cuttack. The money which I had with me amounted to no more than three annas.

Considering the meager amount of money I had, I decided to walk all the way to Cuttack. After walking about fifteen miles, I reached Bavade, a small village-market by the roadside. Then I took a little *mudhi* and *ukhuda*. It was not possible to munch all these and I threw half of these into the canal nearby and cupping my hands, had a drink of water from the same. For a moment, I thought as if the water was given in exchange of the *mudhi* and *ukhuda* I had offered to the canal earlier. I reached the railway station at Cuttack before evening.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

I was a stranger in Cuttack. I had no idea of the place I should proceed to. I had no idea about the location of the Swaraj Ashram, and the road leading to it. I was also feeling too shy to ask anybody to give me directions.

However, I found five to seven persons walking before me. From their conversation, which I overheard, I learnt that they were also going to the Ashram. They had come all the way from Salipur in a group only to have a glimpse of Mahatma Gandhi. I was alone. So I joined them.

We reached the Ashram at about 1 P.M. The place had turned into a sea of humanity. Hundreds were having their meals on the inside verandah. At this time a healthy young man came from inside and called me in.

Later, when I got closer to him I came to know that his name was Sudarsan Praharaj. He had given up his studies to join the freedom struggle. He was a student at a school in Cuttack. He had a fairly good idea about different areas of the state. I was very happy to have such a fine and knowledgeable young man as my guide.

Everyone in the Ashram started walking towards the railway station after midnight. I, too, joined them. After getting there I found the place very crowded. It was not possible to enter the platform. I had to stand on one side of the road with hundreds of people. I started shouting with them at top of my voice 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi.'

I cannot describe how the day passed.

* * *

In the evening, a public meeting was held on the sands of river Katjuri. An immense crowd had assembled there. From the top of the embankment of the river, I looked left and right, and was amazed to see the crowd on either side. It appeared as if the crowd stretched all the way to the distant horizon. I accompanied Sudarsan

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

and chose a suitable place for myself near the dais and waited for Mahatma Gandhi.

At last, Gandhiji arrived, accompanied by Kasturaba. Pandit Gopabandhu and Bhagirathi Mahapatra led the way. Others also accompanied them.

Suddenly the sky reverberated with the sound, 'Gandhiji Ki Jai.' It was the voice of the crowd, a bemused and respectful crowd. Gandhiji sat on the top of the dais. Kasturaba was seated on a chair to the left of Gandhiji. In those days amplifiers were not heard of at Cuttack.

At first, Pandit Gopabandhu welcomed Gandhiji and Kasturaba. His voice was grave and resonant. Though the area was thronged with people, silence prevailed everywhere. Everybody was motionless and quiet, listening to the speech of Pandit Gopabandhu with keen eagerness and the same could be heard clearly at a considerable distance.

As far as I can remember, Pandit Gopabandhu said, 'Utkal is a sacred place, a place dear to God. All the great sons of mother India have visited this place. Now this place has become even more sacred after the visit of Mahatma Gandhi. Three hundred years ago, Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya, had crossed this river at this point on the sacred day of Dolapurnima. Today, another holy man, the incarnation of God in the present era has sanctified this place with his presence. This is our good luck and good fortune.'

Gandhiji gave a long lecture in Hindi describing the condition of the country, the objectives of the freedom movement and the course of action to be followed to make the movement a success. I was not able to follow his lecture. However, I clapped along with others as if I understood every word he uttered. After the lecture was over, one young man from the audience asked Gandhiji, 'You are asking us to give up our studies. You and other leaders like you have learnt English. How will we serve the nation without acquiring a knowledge of English?

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhiji said, 'Mr. Gopabandhu has told you about Sri Chaitanya just now. Had he read English? Chiang-Kai Shek, the leader of China does not know English. How is he ordering the affairs of that country?'

Later on I came to know that the young man who had asked the question was none other than the younger brother of Shri Kishori Charan Kanungo, the Headmaster of our school, and his name was Sir Nrusingh Charan Kanungo. At that time few dared to put a question to Mahatma Gandhi at a public meeting. A lot of people admired the young man for having mustered the courage to do so while a few people took him to task.

Gandhiji was presented to us as the tenth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Kalki, the eleventh incarnation was to come after a long time. A story was associated with this belief, which states as follows: Dwaraka, the birthplace of Lord Krishna is the birthplace of Gandhiji. The main aim of Ramachandra, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu was to destroy Ravana. Again the main aim of Lord Krishna the incarnation of Lord Vishnu was to destroy Kansa, the demon. Now again the quantum of vice like dishonesty has increased very much. To do this God has come as a saviour in the shape of Gandhiji to destroy the Government. Very recently Pandit Gopabandhu had defeated Mr. Gruning, the commissioner of Orissa, a rare coincidence in support of the belief.

Sudarsan and I brought a handful of sand from the river and spread the same before the Ashram as we too had started believing that Gandhiji would drive out the foreign rulers one day. We treasured that sand for a long time after Gandhiji and Kasturaba had trodden on the same.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Mahatma Gandhi, an Uncivilised Man

Chintamani Mishra
Tr. Akhtar J. Khan

It all happened within a few days of enrolling myself at Satyabadi. I heard of Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Satyabadi and rushed to my uncle. Telling him of Gandhi's greatness and the significance of his non-cooperation movement I planned to make him wear Khadi and thought of turning him into a staunch Congressman. I asked him to come to Satyabadi and listen to Gandhi's speech. He eagerly agreed to accompany me. Both uncle and I joined the meeting that was held in the school premises. Since there were lot of muslims living in our village we were well acquainted with Hindi mixed with Oriya.

The meeting progressed and the time for Mahatma Gandhi's afternoon meal arrived. One of his associates brought some food and placed it in front of Mahatma Gandhi. There was a spoon in the bowl, and Gandhiji held the bowl and started eating it hurriedly. Everyone kept looking at him. I kept guessing what rare food the bowl contained. At this moment, my uncle exclaimed, 'What an uncouth fellow!' and got up and left the meeting in a huff. I, too, rose to my feet and followed him and stood beside him quietly. 'You fool! Without knowing anything about this man, you brought me here. You wasted fifty paise on train fare. You call him a Mahatma? Sitting in the meeting he is eating. How can you eat, while thousands of people are watching! Such persons are uncivilized and you call him a Mahatma!'

I explained that, punctual in his habits, Gandhiji took his food on time. But in vain!

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The next morning, before we started for our village, I requested Hari babu and Ram babu to talk to my uncle. Even before Hari babu could start discussing the matter, uncle asked Hari babu whether he could eat in front of five thousand people. Have all the easterners degenerated. Everyone said that it was time for lunch. This boy and his friends have also been saying the same thing. Could any sensible man have done what this man did yesterday?' From what Hari babu and Ram babu said to each other I gathered that both of them had given up defending Gandhi and accepted uncle's allegations.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

An Argument with Gandhi

Soilabala Das

In the winter of 1927 I came from Patna to Cuttack. My late father Madhusudan Das' house was to be sold by auction. He was ruined owing to his several industrial enterprises. As there was no one to help him he incurred debts for which his houses had to be sold, to meet his liabilities to the Maharaja of Parilakimedi.

Just at this time the local of the Congress came to my father to request him to accommodate Mahatma Gandhi and his staff at our house. They knew my father's financial trouble but they did not hesitate to put a new responsibility on his shoulders. My father's nature was such that he would spend his last price for others, sacrificing himself for the cause of the country. But the Congressmen never did anything to appreciate his work. My father gladly agreed to have him as his guest.

My father went to Ahmedabad in 1924 to seek help from Mahatmaji for his industrial development. He promised to do something for him but he could not do it. Had he been able to help my late father, he would not have gone to his grave. When he was our guest I was asked by my father to help him and accompany Mahatmaji everywhere, which I gladly did. It was arranged that Gandhiji would address the women of the town. I accompanied him to the meeting at the town hall at Cuttack. In those days, there were not many Congress ladies in Cuttack, nor were they financially well of, as they are now under the National Government. Very few ladies attended the meeting. Gandhiji sat on a table and spoke to them for about 15 minutes. The ladies put their *pranam* before him for *darshan.*

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The collection was about sixty rupees. Seeing the small amount given by the Cuttack ladies he was disappointed. I wanted to speak to him but restrained myself, though I knew most of the ladies were not well off. They had done what they could.

That night my father, Mahatmaji, his Secretary and some others were sitting on a carpet in our drawing room and talking. I was also present there. Mahatmaji addressed me and said, 'I came especially to Cuttack as your guest, for I want a favour from you.' We were surprised. Then I said, 'I will certainly do what you want me to do, if I am able.' He said, 'In Patna, in Calcutta and even at Cuttack those who know you have told me that you are the person who can help me, so I want your help.' I said, 'I am much honoured because of your confidence in my ability, but I am sorry I can not give you my promise until I know the nature or the work and of my ability to do it.' But he was adamant and said he was sure I could do it for him. He said, 'I want you to take up Charka and introduce it to the ladies of Orissa.' With folded hands I begged him to excuse me, as I would not be able to make it a success. He asked, 'Why can you not make it a success, when everyone says you can,' I answered, 'Unless I put my whole heart and soul into the work I cannot make it a success.' He asked, 'Don't you believe in Charka?' I said, 'No, the Charka will never bring salvation to India or solve its economic problems. But it is good for the cultivators. They can grow cotton in their own fields, and can make their own dhotis saris and gamchhas. But the middle and rich classes will never take to it.' Then he asked me again, 'If you do not believe in Charka why you are wearing a Khaddar sari?' I replied, 'You are our honoured guest. I do not wish to appear before you in any sari which will be repugnant to your eyes.' He asked, 'Am I to understand that you will discard Khaddar as soon as I leave your house?' I said, 'Yes.' He kept quiet for a minute or two. Everyone present was surprised at my boldness. Then Gandhiji said again, 'Very well, now I shall ask from you another favour, will you do it?' I said, 'Unless I know what it is, it is difficult for me to say

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

whether I shall do it or not. I cannot deceive you by saying I shall do a thing which I never intend doing.' He then stretched his hands and said, 'Give me all your saris.' I said, 'Please excuse me, I am sorry to refuse you again. For I know you will burn all my saris. I do not wish to make a bonfire of my saries. They have not hurt me and my lifelong policy is waste not, want not.' He said, 'I shall give you a dozen fine Bezwada saries every year as long as I live.' I said, 'I am sorry the proposal does not tempt me. If you are so anxious not to use foreign things why are you using motor cars, medicine and watches etc? They should be discarded by you, but under the present circumstances we cannot do so.' Gandhiji did not like my answers. He said, 'In ancient India a host and hostess would give anything to a guest and you cannot give your saries to me.' I said, 'We are not in ancient India, our ideas have changed under British rule and we have adapted ourselves accordingly. We are used to so many things that we would find it difficult to give them up. If you want me not to buy any foreign things I am willing to promise.' Gandhiji did not appreciate my remarks. He turned to my father and said, 'You heard how your daughter talked to me?' Then he addressed me and said, 'I want you to become a member of the Congress.' I said, 'I shall be pleased to become a Congress woman when I shall believe in Congressmen and Congress policy. I shall let you know and come to your Ashram at Sabarmati.' I asked him to pardon my bold remarks. He left our house the next evening saying that I should be welcome to his Ashram whenever I come but I never had the pleasure and honour of being his guest at his Ashram.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

My Idol

Sarala Devi

Tr. Sachidananda Mohanty

I had the privilege to meet Gandhiji on a number of occasions. I had his *darshan* at the venue of the various Congress Sessions. On his visit to Orissa, he first arrived in Cuttack city. From then onward, I became his follower and fully dedicated my life for his cause. I was inspired by him and left home to free Mother India from the shackles of the foreign rule. His spirit of sacrifice made me forget my surroundings, and the exigencies of my worldly life.

Gandhiji gave me a new lease of life. He infused into me the flame of a new world and new revolutionary ardour.

A formidable crowd of people—the rich, the mighty and the ordinary—thronged the little hut on the bank of the Katjuri River where Gandhiji stayed. Clearly, they were all very keen to have his *darshan*. None came empty handed. People brought gifts of fruits and flowers. Amazingly, the hut never seemed to get filled up despite the presence of such a huge crowed. At Gandhiji's bidding, I distributed items to the poor and the destitute. Women and children came in a multitude, in old and tattered clothes.

Gandhiji signalled for a little rest even as the restive crowd never left the door steps. I was charged with guard duty. The stream of people continued unabated. Now and again, I would go and appraise Gandhiji about the swelling numbers. 'You would not leave me in peace!' said Gandhiji half in jest. 'I am helpless,' I replied, 'The crowd is undeterred by bad weather. They are unmindful of your state of health and exhaustion. They are unmoved by my prayer. They are all gathered at the mango tree!'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhiji came out and appeared before the people. He said to me: 'You made me get up from my seat so many times. Now tell me, what progress you have made regarding the funds for the Harijans? I replied: 'Mahatmaji, you are scheduled to visit the city at 4.00 p.m. I have called for a meeting of women at the town hall. All the women must have gathered there by now. I have no doubt that the people present would hand over whatever they can to your appeal.'

Gandhiji reached Cuttack city before nightfall. Earlier I had put up the notice regarding his address at the Sri Ramachandra Bhavan. The Mahatma came accompanied by Congress volunteers. None of these volunteers had by then become a 'Neta.' No vested interests and no problems! Everything was carried out smoothly. Mahatmaji apprised us of the purpose of his visit. He underlined the plight of the Harijans and stressed the role of womenfolk. He advised setting up of a fund for Harijans.

I rendered Gandhiji's Hindi lecture into English and appealed to the womenfolk to donate liberally in the form of money and jewellery for the 'Harijan fund.' Most women of the well-to-do families, present there, gave money. Those who did not have it with them, emptied themselves of all jewellery and dumped everything into a white sheet. There was more than sixty to seventy *bharis* of jewellery. In addition, about a thousand rupees were also collected quickly. Mahatmaji felt very happy seeing the gifts received from the awakened and crystal-like female souls.

The meeting ended. I stayed with him from morning till six in the evening. I was quite surprised to see that instead of eating himself, he was distributing the fruits among children. Those who had brought baskets of fruits for Gandhiji felt disappointed because, instead of him, the fruits went to unfamiliar women, children, the poor and the destitute. On an earlier occasion, accompanied by Kasturba and Debdas, Gandhiji had stayed in the Swarajya Ashram. Later, he moved to Annada Ray's house and then to Naba babu's. I had been to all these places.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Sketch of Gandhi

Frieda Hauswirth

This year Gandhi was touring flood and famine-stricken Orissa. As luck would have it, he was due in Cuttack just while I was waiting for my husband to return from his short visit to Calcutta and looking forward to have him take me for the first time to his birth town and our plantation. I knew four out of the seven men of the Local Congress Board of Cuttack very well, and induced one of these to take me to the meeting where they discussed plans concerning lecture arrangements, financing, reception, and entertainment of Gandhi.

It interested me to get a glimpse behind the scenes and to find out just what Gandhi's touring involved, but my main purpose was to find an occasion to sketch Gandhiji. These men were without any understanding or appreciation of art. To each and all a photograph would have been as satisfying as the best painting and far preferable as it cost distinctly less. But all were very friendly and quite willing to help.

The committee met at the house Gandhiji was to occupy. My diary reads:

Cuttack, Orissa, December 16, 1927.

On the veranda floor a striped woven durree, a long desk only a foot in height, and around it, their faces lit by a dim lantern, sit, cross-legged, the men of the committee.

I, too, sit on the floor.

Yes, everything will be ready for Mahatmaji in time. Walls have been whitewashed, rubbish removed in house and garden. Odds and ends have been bought; fifty rupees worth of fruits and vegetables

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

have been ordered from Calcutta, a night's journey distant. I am amazed. Gandhiji's needs are said to be so simple.

Gandhiji would be travelling, they expected, with a party of about six people. They plan that Mirabehn (Miss Slade, daughter of an English Rear Admiral, and now *chela,* i.e, disciple of Gandhiji) shall have a room to herself.

One of the men, a lawyer, suggests that I be one of the reception committee to meet Gandhiji at the train. I demur, and the matter is dropped.

When Gandhiji reaches Cuttack station at 2.30, silence is to greet him. For at one o' clock sharp on that day he will have started his weekly day of strictest silence. Those around him will speak to the reception committee, but Gandhi himself is not to be addressed and will not answer, we are told. A unique reception! Where else, outside of India, could one imagine such a greeting?

It is agreed that I am to come to this house before Gandhi arrives and that I am to try to arrange directly with Miss Slade for a sitting. But how? Gandhi will not 'pose.' He has neither time nor desire for such things. I remember his views as expressed by an interviewer: 'I personally have no need of arts like painting. For I myself find enough satisfaction in the view of the starry vault. Perhaps Europe needs painting to satisfy her because she has no starry sky to enjoy most of the year, as you must be knowing. I do not want to decorate my Ashram with paintings...I do not particularly care for paintings, nor would I go out of my way to ask others to get them to decorate their walls with. I myself do not like to adorn the wall of my Ashram because I want always to get outside them—the walls seem to confine me, to restrict my liberty, to keep me away from nature.' In another part he was quoted as saying: 'If you go to my Satyagraha Ashram, you will find the walls bare. And my friends object to this. I admitted I don't have paintings on the walls... that is because I think that the walls are meant for sheltering us, and not because I am opposed to art as such. For have I not gazed and gazed

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

at the wonderful vault of the starry sky—hardly ever tiring of the same? And I do say that I can never conceive of any painting superior to the star-studded sky in its satisfying effect on the mind. It has bewildered me, mystified me—sent me into the most wonderful ecstatic thrills imaginable. Side by side with this wondrous mystery of god's artistic handiwork, does not that of man appear to be the merest tinsel?'

Knowing these not very encouraging views of Mahatmaji's, I feel none too sure, but am determined somehow to win out. Yet even if I am permitted to try, shall I be able to catch a likeness of Gandhiji, a saint, while he talks to his own soul, and argues and pleads with young Indians silently, through his pen, in his inimitable, direct, native, yet keen fashion?

December 18th. At two this afternoon, tired of waiting for servant and gharri, which failed to show up, I picked up my sketching things and walked through the deep red dust and warm December sun towards the house which Mahatmaji is to occupy. I had visited it but once before in the dark. A narrow lane leading off the main road, eager youths dressed in khaddar and wearing bright colored khaddars stars on their breasts, were passing me on bicycles, on foot; no need to ask my way. Near the entrance to a house a crowd is waiting and khaddar volunteers at the gate to keep it out. I enter, followed by questioning glances—a white woman coming to see Gandhiji? And a Memsahib carrying with her own hands! Two oddities rolled into one!

On the veranda lounge several youths, volunteers. I am immediately taken indoors. Gandhi's host comes towards me and takes me to the living room, a room furnished in bad imitation European style.

'C.R.Das's sister is here; would you like to see her? She has come to serve Gandhiji.' (C.R.Das was the great Bengali swarajist leader who steered the Nationalist ship after Gandhi, aghast at the threatened general bloodshed, dropped the helm in 1922.)

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Delighted, I at once follow the host into the inner court. But in this Zenana court, usually sacred to women and servants only, there sits but one woman, come all the way from Calcutta, a night's journey away; the host's own womenfolk had completely vacated both house and garden, and not a single local woman was present. Urmila Devi was surrounded by half a dozen eager and willing, but helpless, men, doing her bidding, fetching and carrying. A Brahmin cook, dressed only in loincloth and sacred thread, slips in and out of the kitchen.

Urmila Devi sat on a palm-leaf mat, a middle aged lady in widow's garments, preparing vegetables with the *bonti*, a curved knife fastened into a flat piece of wood, which was held down with her bare toes. I, too, squat and we begin to chat. She arrived that morning at five from Calcutta and put up with friends.

'I came here to meet and serve him. Other religious devotees go to Puri, to Benares, or to Rameswaram. Somewhere, at least once a year, I go to meet Mahatmaji; that is my annual pilgrimage!'

I took out my pocket knife and started peeling potatoes, which she then sliced as thin as paper on her curved knife. Try as I would, the east won over the west in speed! I laughed and told her how in my western cocksureness I had 'elevated' table-high my kitchen upon first arriving in India, only to realize slowly how all my clever western inventions could not come up in efficiency to the simple old Indian household tools, and merely served to make my servants unhappy. We laughed.

Urmila Devi had very much wanted to go and meet Mahatmaji at the train; on her way she stopped here to have a fleeting look at the house where he would put up.

'I found everything disorganized, nothing ready. These men (with a commiserating glance at the domestically ineffectual men around) had not even thought of ordering a fire ready for baths and absolutely nothing was done towards preparation of food.'

'It is a disgrace that not a single local woman has come forward

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

to manage things,' I exclaimed. 'You, from Calcutta, can have no conception of the idiotic rigidity of purdah here!'

'The trouble is,' Urmila Devi said, 'that Gandhiji and his party left Balasore at nine this morning, and they will certainly have taken no food before starting. So what could I do? Of course I sat right down to work, as you see, instead of going to the station.'

Urmila Devi questioned me about local conditions and about myself. I told her of my special desire to make a sketch of Gandhi.

'Oh, I wish you could! No one has yet made a good one, and the country is flooded with bad pictures of him.' the host was standing near. He objected: 'Gandhi will be in his silence—how can one approach him?'

'Oh, that's all right', Urmila rejoined. 'One can talk to him; he doesn't mind. Only he never speaks. He's wonderful, never breaks his silence under any condition whatever. He even laughs silently!'

We've finished. Little mountains of prepared vegetables are being carried off to the kitchen. I laugh. 'It looks to me sufficient food to feed a regiment, yet I am told Gandhiji is so simple!'

'He is! And so is Mirabai! Almost another Mahatmaji! They both live on milk and fruits. But the volunteers need food; there are always so many surrounding him, so many hangers on.'

Urmila Devi and I get up and stroll towards the living room prepared for Gandhi. The veranda has jet black pillars of suspicious coal tar freshness. The upper part is painted a rich ochre, the ceiling and inner portions a dazzling white. I laughingly point it out to her.

'Do you see what an earthquake has swept this house? All is new paint and fresh and clean. Ordinarily, people don't care what their houses look like; don't notice spotted walls, heaped rubbish, cluttered and flowerless yards. That is one of my deep regrets. I have talked myself blue in the face, but it does no good. It needs a Mahatmaji's visit to make them see it. And even then it is only for a day! And you should see how the men were digging up, buying and borrowing khaddar-clothing to wear merely for this occasion. Many

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

who ordinarily never wear it. They think they are honoring Mahatmaji. I cannot but feel that a man like him would rather see sincerity and genuine effort in their hearts than this show of a day.'

'I can assure you, Gandhiji would wish rather they did not wear khaddar at all.' Urmila Devi said eagerly. I remembered reading of the remark of a political leader, laughingly quoted by Gandhiji himself: 'I like nothing better,' that man told Gandhiji, 'than to go clad in khaddar to the councils or social gatherings to spite the Englishmen, and then to come to you clad in mill-made cloth to spite you!' Far preferable to the attitude of many local people!

The living room for Gandhiji has been prepared Indian style: nothing but thick carpets on the floor, and some round hard bolsters on a clean white sheet in the center. The host steps up and anxiously turns towards Urmila Devi. He points to the floor.

The pillows are khaddar, the sheet is khaddar, so is the first rug. 'But this lowest rug is foreign!'

'Gandhiji does not care!' Urmila Devi exclaims. 'He wants no show or extra trouble.' The host, relieved, turns away.

A single chair is in the room, no doubt for 'emergency'!

Urmila Devi turns towards me.

'You'd better come and sit in this chair. We'll wait for him here.'

Instead I slip off my shoes and sit on the floor beside her. We keep on chatting. She knows so much about Gandhiji. In the short time I've known her she has become far more than merely the sister of C.R.Das; she is a sincere, charming and very capable woman whom I would like to have as a friend.

There is the sound of a motor. We reach the veranda just in time to see Gandhiji mount the steps. A rather short and slim, bony man. He wears a white khaddar loincloth that leaves his skinny legs bare; another cloth is thrown over his shoulder, together with a woolen wrap. In his own hand he carries a black box.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhiji is ugly. A shaven but bristly scalp with a wispy topknot, a protruding red-blue under lip, big gaps where teeth are missing, large ears standing out almost at right angles. But I see his smile and think him beautiful – the kindliest, broadest, sweetest smile! I am aware only of the wave of loving respect going out to him from the surrounding crowd, and of a radiance and immense kindliness flooding from him.

The veranda and the garden are full of people who silently press near, bow, and take the dust of his feet.

He looks towards us and recognizes Urmila Devi. The most winning smile and light in the eyes greet her silently. I am introduced to him. No doubt expecting an English name to grace a white face, he looks a question. My name is repeated to him: 'Mrs. Sarangadhar Das.' Another charming smile and a kind glance direct into my eyes.

We follow him to the living room. I whisper to Urmila: 'Mirabehn is not coming?'

'She follows in the second motor.'

Everybody has been eager, but silent, with a subdued shining enthusiasm. Dozens of hands stretch out to carry the luggage to the room, hands which on other occasions would have let a peon carry even a light attaché case!

In the living room Mahatmaji at once sits down on the floor, Urmila Devi next to him. She has motioned me to sit by her side.

Without hesitation she breaks the silence and talks to him freely and eagerly, giving him news of his Calcutta friends and their doings. Gandhiji listens and answer with smiles and nods or negative of head.

People come, bend down to touch his feet, remain silently for a few minutes and make way for others. Adoration and reverence and joy are plainly written on the faces of all.

In less than a minute's time Gandhiji quietly opens the mysterious black box; brass and steel glints out of it. His thin nervous hands dip into this tangle, a pull here and a pull there. Now a wooden

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

lever comes up, again some steel rods unfold. It is a portable *charka* that rises before my eyes. Out of a drawer-section Gandhiji then takes a bobbin and a green khaddar roll. He unfolds it on his lap; it contains soft, fluffy, slender puffs of cotton fibre. In another minute the silence is punctuated by the soft hum of the wheel as he spins his very fine yarn.

No loss of time, and certainly no posing. Most utter naturalness. In this strange house in a strange town, two minutes after arriving from a tiring railway journey, Gandhi is silently at work, carrying out in action his deepest conviction.

No wonder a man with such a power of concentration and such single-mindedness can sway multitudes as easily as he turns his wheel whenever he decides to do so! Newness, strangeness, crowds – to him these things don't matter, don't exist. He holds his universe subservient in his hand!

Into the room comes a very tall European woman, dressed in old Indian style, but in Gandhi's plain white khaddar. She wears a *choli,* a sort of blouse that is really merely a breastband, backless and tied behind with strings, leaving a strip of waist bare and giving glimpses of the nude back when the folds of the upper garment move. This latter is a sari, a cloth about six yards long and draped to serve as skirt and shawl in one. No need to ask who it is; it can be no one but Mirabehn. In this dress at which her country women would have stared with horror, she carries herself with no self consciousness and great dignity.

I look again: almost a man's face in its strong lines, accentuated because the hair is shaved close to the head like a widow's or a *sanyasini*'s. Heavy-swinging black eyebrows, sharply curved nose, intellectual forehead, a bad skin. She speaks quietly to Gandhi and slips out again. I follow her.

'Miss Slade, I want especially to meet you. The other night the committee suggested that I address myself to you. I want to make a sketch of Gandhi.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

'I am afraid that is out of the question,' comes the crisp, unhesitating answer. 'He never consents. He is opposed to such things, and moreover you know that he is ill and tired. One could not expect him to pose.'

'Of course, I would not expect him to pose, I would simply do my best while he sits there.'

'No, we must not put any strain upon him. However, later on in the day I will ask him about tomorrow, if I think it possible, and will send you word.'

Somehow her English directness, her 'you art-cat mayn't look at my king,' expression does not please me. So, instead of leaving, I return to the room and sit down again near Urmila Devi. Watching my opportunity, I whisper to her the ultimatum laid down by Mirabehn.

'You wait, don't go!' she says and turns again toward Gandhiji. Shortly after she tells him chattily:

'Mrs. Das wants to make a sketch of you; she is an artist, you know. It would be so nice to have one.'

Gandhi looks at us both, smiles and nods. I grasp the opportunity.

'Mahatmaji, I've waited and hoped for years for just this opportunity. Mayn't I?'

Another nod and smile. Like a flash I settle myself on the floor with my back leaning against the sharp edges of a small table upon which I have previously placed my materials. At once I grab these and start a charcoal sketch. After a while Mirabehn comes in and with great surprise see me at work.

'Oh, so you are already at it without waiting! I do hope you asked for permission!'

'Of course I would not sketch without permission,' I answer, nettled, and with more emphasis than necessary, though in a subdued voice, and feeling a bit triumphant. Then something about Gandhi's presence makes me at once ashamed of this pettiness. After all,

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Mirabehn no doubt simply does her best to guard Gandhiji from annoyance and overstrain. Two children come in; the host's no doubt. They touch their forehead to the floor at Gandhi's feet, and then sit silent at my right hand. Round-eyed and open-mouthed, they watch me with keenest eagerness.

Urmila goes out. One or two more people come and go. A young man sits motionless facing Gandhi, never taking his eyes off him. A great peace fills the atmosphere. The wheel hums uninterruptedly, my charcoal glides with a soft slur over the paper, the children follow it breathlessly.

Gandhi sits utterly self-absorbed. He has shifted his head so that I cannot continue with it. But for all the world I cannot bring myself to break the silence. I content myself by sketching body and wheel. For about twenty minutes there is absolute silence about us. I am too busy to think, but somehow a hush and gladness pervades the room and my soul as I search line for line. This touching, great simplicity!

People come again. Through the window back of me several men are silently watching. Now others crowd to the door and shut out my light. In a hushed voice, so as not to break in upon Gandhiji's meditation, I beg of them to make room. They melt away. Gandhi slowly raises his head and looks at me questioningly, thinking I had addressed him. I negate merely by motion, and we continue our silent work.

The air in the great stone house is chilly. He draws the woolen shawl over his shoulder. I've sketched in all but the face. A bundle of mail is brought to Gandhiji. Mirabehn comes with still more which she has evidently already gone through for him. She also places some milk and grapes beside him. While he sorts and peruses his mail, she comes and looks over my shoulder.

'I see you are postponing the most difficult and important part!' 'Yes I'll do this face when Gandhiji spins again. He has utterly changed his pose,' I say rather shortly.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

'Well, I am glad you got permission.'

I look up into her eyes; they are thoroughly friendly. She continues. 'I wish we could get a good sketch of him; none has been made as yet.'

I work on. Just this morning I had looked over some Mogul drawings. Are they influencing me? With the fewest possible lines and so shadows I am searching.

Two or three people come in. Also Mirabehn with a doctor. Gandhiji stretches out his arm and his blood pressure is ascertained. A consultation. He is not to exert himself at all, his visit to the nearby Alakashrama is to be abandoned if he at all desires to give the public speech at Cuttack for which he has mainly come.

We then all leave the room for an hour or two to let Gandhiji bathe and rest.

Urmila Devi, Mr Desai, some volunteers and I sit cross-legged on the veranda floor and eat lunch from fresh, shining banana leaves that serve as plates. Later in the afternoon I resume my sketching. Mirabai comes again. 'You are getting it!' she exclaims.

How shockingly I love praise and encouragement! Clever or stupid, I expand under it! This time I am especially gratified, for Mirabai knows Gandhiji so intimately, and if she approves, it means being passed by a not lenient judge. And it is not easy to draw when Gandhi so often shifts his pose, moves his head, and when dozens of eyes are on my work, judging nascent line by line. And I went so immensely to succeed, for I consider this the most interesting sketch I have ever attempted.

The room darkens, Gandhiji has resumed spinning. I have almost finished, too tired to dare touch the face again. My body is aching; my legs especially are stiff and numb, doubled under me while I sat upright on the floor hour after hour.

People come again. Mirabehn studies my sketch.

'You have caught a very good likeness.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Urmila Devi exclaims: 'It's wonderful, wonderful! I want to run away with that sketch at once!'

'You really think so? I am so glad. I think the inspiration flowing from Mahatmaji has helped!'

Through door and window others crowd to look. From the veranda remarks drift in to me, partly in Hindi, partly in English, and they are approving. My heart expands happily. Both more and less from vanity: an immense satisfaction! For it is something to know that these people feel I've truly rendered their adored leader. Of course, I tell myself, they know nothing of art! But do I? Who does? What is art?

For the present it suffices me that I've pleased these people; never mind art-critics in Paris!

I turn to Gandhiji. 'May I come tomorrow?'

He nods assent. I ask for a needle and thread and sew my mark for the placing of the charka on the carpet, so no sweeper can efface it until then.

Urmila Devi makes some remark about my work to Gandhiji. I turn to him:

'I've waited and hoped for this for years, and I want so much to finish it completely.' I express my thanks. He smiles half teasingly and takes up a pencil. On the sheet he hands me is scribbled: 'What are you going to give me then?'

I look at him, puzzled, then at Mirabehn, not sure of his meaning. Is it a copy he wants, I wonder? But I keep silent. Mirabehn reads the lines and smiles:

'You have your wish of years now; he's given it to you. What will you give in return?'

'Oh, anything, anything,' I say eagerly, extravagantly. He meets my eyes with his quizzical, kindly smile, and I feel a foolish child under it. Mirabehn says urgently and warningly:

'You know what he wants – spinning!'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

This dratted, thoughtlessly insincere extravagance of expression of ours! Promising what I never could nor would live up to! But even if his silence had not prevented him, I know Gandhi is too wise to extract fulfillment of promises foolishly given.

Strangely I feel I've made a good sketch, but dropped below his plane! I feel like modifying, explaining, excusing myself, yet I keep silent. Why break into his great silence with word over my foolish promise?

I make my *pranam* – touch my folded hands to my forehead, bow, and withdraw.

Tomorrow at nine I am to return.

On the veranda a crowd is waiting, wanting to see my sketch. More approval. I am escorted to the motor which brought Gandhiji, and sped off with a volunteer in charge of my other paint things, for the precious charcoal sketch I carry in my own hands to avoid effacing it till I can fix it at home. The last goodbye still sounds in my ears:

'It is the best sketch any artist has yet made of him!'

Purring like a cat with rich cream, smiling derisively at myself, yet elated and somehow deeply moved, I drive home through the glowing dusk.

My diary notes end here. But that day was not to end with elation. I glimpsed an amusing shadowside of Gandhi's visit. After dinner at the house of my friend there is an informal meeting. Consternation: the funds collected will not cover expenses! Apparently each town is expected to meet all expenses of Gandhi's party, including the railway fare to the next stopping place, in this case Madras, over a thousand miles away! Saddest of all is the face of another friend of mine (whip of his political party in the Legislative Assembly – a party not supporting Gandhi). As a *beau geste*, more effective than sincere, he has topped the list of subscribers with a promise of one hundred rupees, to find to his incredible disgust that up till now even the richest of Gandhi's own followers has subscribed not more than ten rupees!

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A squad of collectors is appointed in haste, who are to scurry the town over the next morning in search of carriages they are to go to the houses of acquaintances to gather even coppers, should silver not be forthcoming! And in this town these ardent men-followers of Gandhi, these intellectuals, actually did send some women out collecting money, though they did not send them out to look after the comfort of Gandhi!

On the following day I went to Gandhiji at about nine in the morning. He was still in his silence, busily writing for his paper, *Young India,* with files, books, papers scattered all about him. But there lies also the wreath of marigolds prepared for his morning worship, and the string of prayer beads. I sit down silently and make a watercolor sketch of him.

After a while, he took refreshments of only milk and fruits. Then he attended to letters, took messages, listened to spoken information but all his answers were given only in pantomime or written out on slips of paper.

As on the preceding day, a doctor to take his blood pressure. Two hundred! Consternation! Loud and whispered consultation. Could the instrument be right? How long ago since it had last been used? Was it the only instrument in town? (A town of 50,000 inhabitants!) No, doctors so and so might also each have one! Hurriedly, another doctor is called, and later still another came. Sincere worry over Gandhi among his attendants – silent Gandhi himself meeting their anxious eyes with quiet smiles. They plan to call off the big public meeting (a meeting which was held after all, with Gandhi sitting on a chair on top of a table facing an immense crowd, but someone else speaking for him, as he was too week to give the address).

After this Gandhi and I were sitting again in a very silent room, with nothing but the humming of his wheel and the scratching of my sketching-pencil audible. Suddenly there was a very insistent swishing in front of the door. Behold, a high-[illegible]

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

broom in hand, brushing the veranda floor, oh, so persistently, with sidewise glances, hoping to be noticed. And Gandhi did notice, with the faintest smile—this high-caste blatantly demonstrating himself a faithful disciple! Gandhi, who sees, notices and forgives everything—except tampering with principles. I, less forgiving, later related this incident to a friend. 'Lip-service and sham-reform!' 'Oh, no,' my Hindu friend laughingly assured me, 'That man is not sweeping today for the first and last time of his life, as you surmise. He is too stingy to keep proper help and will probably be delighted to keep up a reform which brings both credit in Gandhi's eyes and benefit to his purse!'

Even hypocrisy is paying tribute to Gandhi's spiritual injunctions!

Sharp at one o'clock in the afternoon, after a glance at the watch lying near him, Gandhi started speaking. This sudden breaking of the long silence, which had seemed to spell Gandhi himself—his aloofness and serenity—had a strange, startling effect on me. But with his voice came a new revelation of his very lovable human qualities. One of the first things he did was to dictate a telegram with a gleam of amusement and unconcern. As this was done in the presence of a number of people, I am not violating a confidence in quoting it as near as I can remember. It went to his wife, lovingly mentioned Shanti, his adopted untouchable daughter, gave some messages concerning traveling plans, and concluded with a report about his health: LATEST READING 160, PREVIOUS READING 170 AND 200 – TAKE YOUR CHOICE – THREE DOCTORS, THREE INSTRUTMENTS, THREE READINGS, DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS. MYSELF AS CHIRPY AS EVER, LOVE.

For the rest of the time mind was half occupied with sketching and half with the discussions that went on between him and his constant stream of visitors. His even reasonableness, patience, and clearness in these discussions never failed, even when he was being criticized and gratuitous advice was offered to him.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

One discussion stands out in my memory. Would Gandhi visit a certain temple? As answer he referred to a recent experience (I think in Balasore). He had, as always, pleaded with the orthodox to break down restrictions, arguing that true Hinduism was not exclusive. But he did not visit the local temple. At last a deputation of its priests came, imploring him to do them the honor of blessing the temple by his presence. Would they be willing to have his friends, Mirabehn (Miss Slade) and Rev. Andrews accompany him? No, that could never be; were these not foreigners? Replied the priests. They are my brother and sister; if they may not enter, then I also will not, was Gandhi's final answer.

At last my sketch was finished. It passed from hand to hand and was then given to Gandhi. He looked at it, shyly, I felt (he never uses a mirror and is absolutely without vanity), and then turned to me. 'Why did you put so much clothing on me?'

'Gandhiji, you *had* it on!'I replied. (By then, he had discarded the warm covering that he had worn in the morning). He looked doubtfully up at Mirabehn who was standing near, she confirmed my exclamation. I actually believe that he was hardly aware of the fact that he had drawn about him extra covering when he was cold and ill, and that he felt all this accidental drapery as too ornate. But the matter did not interest him enough to discuss it further.

Instead, he turned to me exclusively for a while, really interested in my marriage and in the fact that my husband was experimenting with scientific farming in the wilds of Orissa. He put keen questions concerning this. Then he whimsically referred to my promise to do 'anything' for him, and we were soon deep in a discussing about spinning.

Would I spin? He had been told that I had been amusing myself in spare moments between sketching with spindle and ball of cotton. Mr. Desai tried to teach me, a very clumsy pupil.

'No, Gandhiji, because I do not believe in it as a principle.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

'But you believe fundamentally in freedom for all races and all countries.'

Then, would I not, at least as a symbol, use exclusively khaddar cloth?

No, even that I could not promise, as I had no reason for discriminating against foreign cloth. But I did use a good deal of khaddar, not for political reasons, but because it appealed to my artistic taste and appreciation, with its lovely wood-block decorations in color.

There was a fleeting look of pain and disappointment in Gandhi's eyes; to him homespun has deep economic and spiritual significance, and to have it considered by anyone merely from an artistic point of view must have seemed to him superficial, if not frivolous. Lack of convictions, of courage – that was the trend of his conversation – the deploring of the absence of this spirit in India.

Our discussion ended on a note of sadness; I felt a curious sense of frustration. Intellectually, his economic programme did not appeal to me; spiritually, I felt him worlds above me. I felt as if I and the world of material progress were passing him by, as the waves wash around the base of a cliff, and roll on; but the cliff remains there eternally serene, while the waves their one moment of glinting in the sun, and disappear forever.

That evening after dark, tightly-shuttered carriages rolled into the big compound of Gandhi's resting place; *palanquins* with drawn curtains were carried in by trotting bearers who chanted their rhythmic meaningless tune; figures slipped out of these vehicles, and with bent heads, closely drawn veils, and tinkling of anklets and armlets, glided past the crowd of men in the outer rooms, and disappeared up a staircase to the flat roof. To come out, even veiled like this, to a house where many men were gathered, were indeed a venture and an innovation over which many a heart fluttered uncertainly.

But it was for the sake of a *darshan* of the great Mahatmaji, and to hear his blessed voice that these strictly purdah women of

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Cuttack braved convention. More than a hundred met on the roof, and bared their faces under the light of the moon while listening intently to the words of the great saint—for most of them the first time that they let a stranger glimpse their features. Such is the power of Mahatmaji; he opens doors that have remained closed for centuries. Like a father, scolding, encouraging, advising, he talked to and pleaded with them to throw away old conventions and old restrictions and old apathies, to think and feel and work for a greater home than their narrow secluded one, for the great mother, India.

Quite well I knew that after this one night the majority of these women, who sat with rapt faces, would timidly and contentedly slip back into the warmth and security of strict seclusion; but never again would the new cords touched that night be completely silent. Such is the power of Gandhi's contact.

As we all rose, and I once more bade farewell to Mahatmaji, he reiterated his invitation for me to come to his Ashram some day. I thanked him but probably more keenly attuned through his presence, felt a sharp certainty that this would never be, that my contact with the great soul was ended. But not so with these veiled women on the moon-flooded roof, many of whom I knew, some intimately. A few of them, within the short time of my seven years' acquaintance, had taken steps to break through conventions, which required more courage than most of us Western women are ever called upon to muster against our own society. Whether I remained near or far, my interest and sympathy would always be with them.

This incident once more made me wish that I could make the impatient West understand just what it means for an orthodox Eastern woman to dare to throw away the veil. It is exactly as if one of us Westerners were to go into a house of the red-light district, and proclaim to the whole world, 'I am one with these women!' The immensity of such a decision!

It is one thing to portray such courage and great sense of oneness and freedom in written word, as Olive Schreiner has done

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

in her marvelous dream of the woman who, with voluntarily stained robes, but supporting her broken sister, ascends to the throne of God; it is quite another thing in everyday life for a slip of a sheltered woman, who has been taught to think that her greatest pride lies in the fact that not even the sun has ever glimpsed her face, and that none but prostitutes ever bare their faces to men other than father, brother, or husband – it is quite another thing for such a one to attain the conviction and muster the courage to come out into the open.

And this miracle Gandhiji is accomplishing, not through talking about the rights of women or the joys of freedom and individual choice – these inherently selfish motive would not appeal to an Indian womanhood that has been taught for centuries the beauty of service and sacrifice – but by appealing to a higher, impersonal ideal, the need of their Mother India.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Oranges for Gandhi

Banchhanidhi Pattanaik
Tr. Prajna Paramita Panigrahi

Towards the end of 1927, Mahatma Gandhi came to Orissa to popularise khadi. Sri Niranjan Pattanaik, the then chairman of Orissa Khadi Board, had invited him. He had himself made all the arrangements for this tour. He published the first daily newspaper in Orissa called *Gandhi Samachar*. I wanted to felicitate Gandhiji in our village, Gobara. I was a government employee. So, I could hardly do anything by myself. My classmate, Kashinath Pal, a doctor, served in Gangapur hospital. I caught hold of him. We formed a committee comprising some members and named it 'Abhyarthana Samiti.' Kashinath babu became its president. Both of us started going to villages to collect donations. We wove small pieces of cloth and a chaddar with the thread spun from our own spinning wheels, which we would present to Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji was supposed to visit Aska and Rasulkonda on 6.12.27. Stopping on his way in Gobara was not included in his programme. But we had already made plans for organizing a huge meeting. People had filled the place between the banks of the river Kaliamba and the school and the outskirts of Basudevpur village and that of Gobara village. A platform was raised on the crossroads. A few village women were busy spinning in a place cordoned off for the purpose. Niranjan babu always used to ask us, 'How much money will you be able to give to Gandhiji?' As we were busy collecting till the very last moment, we were not in a position to mention the exact amount. Gandhiji had not included a stopover at Gobara in his programme. A couple of cars drove past

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

our village before Gandhiji's car arrived. The crowd stood still in the belief that Gandhiji was in one of these cars. By the time Gandhiji's car arrived, the crowd had lost its enthusiasm. As they thought that this car would also leave as the ones preceding it, they did not cheer it. Rather, everyone was quiet. When Gandhiji's car arrived, we all went up to garland him. He exclaimed, 'Gobara? Stopping here was not part of my programme?' To his query, Sri Kashinath Pal, the President of the Reception Committee pleaded, 'No sir, you must get down here. This is a meeting of the villagers; you cannot get such an audience in towns.' Gandhiji said, 'Oh, you are stopping me by force' and got down from the car and walked up to the platform. He was garlanded and was given a few reams of cotton cloth and three hundred rupees in cash. I had already got a letter of felicitation printed, which was subsequently auctioned. The gifts included a few oranges. Gandhiji picked these up and said, 'To little children, to little children.' He addressed the crowd for five, seven minutes. Sri Rajkrishna Bose used to translate Gandhiji's speech at every meeting. But his car arrived a little late. So Niranjan babu started translating Gandhiji's speech. At this time, Rajkrishna babu arrived. Seeing him, Gandhiji exclaimed, 'Oh! Here comes my translator.' Immediately, Rajkrishna babu began translating the rest of his speech. Miss Slade, a British lady, was staying in Gandhiji's Ashram. He had rechristened her as Mira. Congressmen called her Mira Behn. She was also accompanying Gandhiji. Everyone looked at her with awe and admiration.

In the course of collecting donations from people, we went to Sri Narayan Panda of Mandara village. He was Kashinath Pal's grandfather. He asked, 'Hey! Gandhi eats fruits, I guess? I will give him fresh fruits from my own garden.' He got up and brought out a star fruit and gave us a piece of it. 'Has Gandhi ever tasted such beautiful star fruits in his life?' The star fruits were really very tasty. He didn't give us any donations. We had to be content with only five or six oranges.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

There was still some time left before Gandhiji would arrive. We asked Kashinath to declare to the public how much each donor has given and how much money has been collected and also to inform everyone at the end that Sri Narayan Panda of Mandara had not contributed anything. As soon as I said this, Panda donated five rupees. When Gandhiji took leave of us, we went to the road to bid him farewell. At this time, Panda leapt from the crowd, pocketed the oranges and tried to leave in a hurry. We saw him do this and cut him short. We told him that Gandhiji has categorically told us to give these to little children. Then we took the oranges from him by force and distributed these to children.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Message from Gandhi

Gobinda Chandra Mishra

Tr. Sujit Mohapatra

Mahatma Gandhi was to come to Orissa that year. I decided to get him to lay the foundation stone of the Ashram. Gandhiji was supposed to be in Orissa for a month starting from November 15th, but that could not happen because of some pressing work. He wrote that he could come only in December and that he would not be able to spend more than twenty days in Orissa. Gandhiji was travelling to canvas support for the Nikhil Bharatiya Charkha Sangh. Babu Niranjan Patnaik was the agent of the Orissa Chapter of this Charkha Sangh. The Mahatma was coming to Orissa to popularise khadi and the charkha. Therefore, the local itinerary of Gandhiji was being prepared by the local agent, babu Niranjan Patnaik. At the same time, I was the main reason for Gandhiji's visit to Orissa. Yet without even informing me, Niranjan babu was preparing an itinerary for Gandhiji. There was no mention of a visit to my Ashram in his itinerary. After coming to hear of this, I felt very unhappy and angry as well. However, I went ahead with all arrangements for the laying of the foundation stone of the proposed building for the Ashram by Mahatma Gandhi. A blueprint had been prepared for the building. Sundry equipments had been collected. Mahatma Gandhi arrived in Orissa from Andhra Pradesh. I was supposed to meet him as soon as he set foot in Orissa. But I deliberately did not do so. After entering Orissa, Mahatmaji first looked for me and asked after me. No one informed me about this as well. Mahatmaji travelled by a motor car from Banpur to Bolgarh. I met him at Khurdha when he stopped

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

there on his way to Bolgarh. The moment he saw me, Mahatmaji burst out, 'Where were you? I have been looking for you.'

I was speechless after hearing this. Without a word, I got in to the car and went to Bolgarh. Mahatmaji stayed at Bolgarh for three days. From there, some of us including Shri Mahadev Desai and Kaka Kalekar went on an outing to Nayagarh. On seeing village Itamati in Nayagarh Kaka Saheb and Mahadev Bhai were overjoyed. There was much discussion on the simplicity and beauty of Orissa's village life.

To have a feel of Oriya culture and life, they entered one or two houses in Itamati and observed everything minutely. They saw that early in the morning, the floors had been rubbed with a paste of cow-dung and cleaned. The cattle-sheds had been cleaned and ash had been sprinkled on them. The brass utensils had been scrubbed clean and polished and arranged neatly in one place. The *tulsi* plant in the courtyard looked bright and cheerful. Kaka Saheb suddenly exclaimed, 'How beautiful, how simple and innocent these people and their dwellings look.' But this beauty and innocence was only a facade. There was no life in them. Everything was dead. Under a wantonly oppressive regime, the sap of village life had dried up. People were so scared that their bodies showed no sign of vitality. We saw many such things in Itamati and held a lot of discussions as well. I was particularly happy to be in the princely states. I enjoyed these discussions. At last we returned from Itamati. From Bolgarh, Mahatmaji travelled to Balasore through Satyabadi and Puri. I told him about my wish to have him lay the foundation stone of the Ashram. I returned to the Ashram to make arrangements for the ceremony.

Mahatmaji returned to Cuttack from Balasore. He was not feeling well. He had fallen sick in Cuttack because he had been made to work without a pause. In Cuttack, Mahatmaji stayed in the house of Shri Gopal Chandra Praharaj. I had a hand in Mahatmaji's staying at Shri Praharaj's house. Shri Praharaj donned khadi and had turned

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

into a Congress worker. I wanted him to become an active worker of Congress. Arrangements had been made for Mahatmaji's stay at his place to bring this wish to fulfilment. While Mahatmaji was there, the question of his going to my Ashram and laying the foundation stone came up. Mahatmaji honoured my request. But it was decided that he would take rest in Cuttack on the advice of the doctors. The three or four days he had set apart for the district of Cuttack, Mahatmaji spent recuperating in Cuttack. He told me if I wanted, he was ready to go with me to the Ashram and lay the foundation stone. In this way, Mahatmaji thrust the responsibility on me.

I faced a major dilemma. I had made elaborate arrangements for the function assuming that Mahatmaji would lay the foundation stone of the Ashram. I could not imagine his not going there. Now, the responsibility of deciding whether he would go or not lay on me. It was impossible to take Gandhiji there and have a quiet function. How would he be able to free himself from the crowds and the commotion? What if his health deteriorated after obliging me? The entire nation would be angry with me and blame me for this. After taking all this into consideration, I did not have the courage to take Mahatmaji with me to the Ashram. I told him that I would not feel hurt if he did not go. Mahatmaji did not go to the Ashram himself, but sent Mira Behn, Shri Mahadev Desai and Kaka Kalekar to attend the function. Mahatmaji wrote a message in his own hands and sent it to me. He wrote on the blueprint of the proposed building that, 'Mira Bahin will lay the foundation of this proposed building on my behalf and it would amount to my laying the foundation.'

*   *   *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhi on Foot

Mirabehn

We had left the camp at the usual hour, 5.30 p.m. It was nearly 7.30 and the night had closed in. As we neared our destination, men with the lanterns came out and met and escorted us along the last mile or so of the road. All along the way, the band of marchers had been increasing and by now numbered several hundreds.

Lights ahead, glittering through the trees, told us that the meeting place was near, and a large crowd standing on the road marked the sidetrack down which we had to go.

That night a palm grove had been chosen. One low table with a white cloth on it served as a platform, and here and there amongst trees lights had been strung up. On all sides rose the tall slender trunks of the palm trees, overhead their feathery tops waved against the star-lit sky, and below, on the sandy soil, sat hundreds of villagers who had gathered there from far and near.

In a few minutes perfect silence prevailed, except for the gentle rustle of the wind in the palm leaves. Amid this scene, the prayer began. At the close of the prayer, in that atmosphere of peace and purity, Gandhiji delivered his message. 'Awake, arise and realize the sin which you have inherited and harboured. Purify Hinduism, or we perish.' The evening march is in progress. All along the way, lines of eager villagers are standing, waiting for Gandhiji's arrival. Here is an extra big crowd and they have spread across the road. A dear old woman, with white hair and her eyes dimmed with age, suddenly rushes hither and thither and amongst the people. 'Where is he? Where is he? I must see him.' In her agitation she is about to

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

miss him, when Gandhiji, noticing her distress, stops and calls her. She comes eagerly towards his voice and peers at him with her old eyes. 'Well, well,' says Gandhiji laughing and putting his hand under her chin. 'Can you now see me properly?' Her joy knows no bounds, and twining her arms round his neck, she lays her head on his breast and is lost in bliss. He gently disengages her arms, she passes back into crowd as one in a dream, but the light remains with her, illuminating her aged face.'

'I am ready for the barber', said Gandhi, and in was brought a little village woman with shaving tackle all complete.

'Hello! This is very good, are you going to shave me?' he inquired laughing.

She answered with a smile and began sharpening her razor in a businesslike way. She shaved his chin and his head also, entirely to his satisfaction.

During the process Gandhi's eye fell on her ornaments. Though a poor woman, she was wearing, beside some lacquer bracelets, a pair of large silver bangles and a gold ornament in her nose.

'What are these wretched things?' he asked. 'They don't make you beautiful. Indeed, they are ugly and harbour dirt.'

The poor woman looked sorrowful. 'I borrowed them especially for this auspicious occasion,' she exclaimed. 'I could not come before you without good ornament!'

Gandhi reasoned with her. She listened, smiled sweetly, that was all. She went away, shaved two other members of the party and, when she had received her wages, quietly went and placed them in front of Gandhi before departing.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Meeting in a Mango Grove

Artabandhu Mohanty
Tr. Supriya Kar

While teaching at Ramachandrapur School, I started celebrating Ganesh Puja there. Sri Benudhar Beuria, Sri Aditya Bal, Sri Krishna Chandra Kar and others helped me in organizing the puja. I allowed Harijans to take part in the puja. I also organised spinning sessions. This upset the secretary of the school. Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by Harijans, arrived at Bari on 31st May 1934. To meet his expenses, I and Gopabandhu babu had collected one hundred and eight rupees through donations. Arrangements for putting Gandhi up were made in Baman babu's courtyard. Choudhury Purna Chandra Mohapatra bore the boarding expenses of Gandhi and his team. At six in the morning, a meeting was held at the Bagda meeting ground. Attendance at this meeting was thin as many found it inconvenient to come so early in the morning. So another meeting was held at a mango grove near Atira by the road to Sahaspur. Gandhiji spoke on the need for the abolition of untouchability. On that occasion, Harijans organised a fair. Inspired by Gandhiji's address, Gobardhan Puhan accepted water from a Harijan. He was the first person in our area to do so.

Many eminent persons from Bari came to Baman babu's yard to meet Gandhiji. Baman babu and his son Naba babu accepted Gandhi's views on untouchability in principle but they dared not put these into practice for fear of objections from a few sanatani Brahmins. In response to this, Gandhiji observed that, while people braved the bullets of the British government, they remained scared of Brahmins. It was decided that Harijans would be allowed to enter temples later. Gandhiji said, 'See to it that I get the assurance before I reach Bhadrak.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhiji's March

Manmohan Choudhury
Tr. Bharati Mohapatra

In May 1934, Gandhiji was to visit Orissa in connection with his *Harijan* upliftment programme. Surendranath Pattnaik and I were staying at my maternal uncle's house in Satyabhamapur. We toured the neighbouring villages to collect donations, which would be presented to Gandhiji. We were being fed very well at uncle's house. We received donation from a few people. We also acquired varied experiences. Once we went to village Ghantimunda after learning that there was a rich moneylender in this village. On getting there, I found an old man kneeling on the verandah and counting money. He had put on a dirty worn-out piece of cloth and was wearing a pigtail. Many bundles of currency notes lay in front of him. We took great pains to convince him of the nobility of Gandhi's mission. The old man listened to us without ceasing to count the coins. In the end he said, 'Okay! That's good.' We had both expected him to give us at least one coin from the heap of coins lying before him. But when the old man brought out two pice from his waistband and offered these to us saying, 'Okay, take it,' all our hopes petered out. We refused to accept the coins and left. However, we did receive good responses elsewhere. In many places, people fed us with much affection. During our stay in Satyabhamapur we received the news of the passing of Madhusudan Das, the great son of Orissa.

We also had our first direct experience of how people were cruelly exploited by landlords. Once we were staying as guests at a landlord's house in village Lekhanpur. He was a supporter of the

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

freedom movement. His cutcherry lay in front of our room. A crowd had gathered there. Suddenly, a noise made me look up and I found a man being beaten with shoes by a *piada* of the landlord or someone else. I kept staring, stunned. Later I regretted my inability to protest against this act of inhumanity.

Around this time I was beginning to be inspired by the ideal of universal brotherhood. People of various countries of the world belong to one human community; they should, therefore, refuse to recognise the narrow boundaries of nation and get united – such thoughts filled my soul. I also entertained a romantic notion about the industrial working class. Whenever, in the village, I came across anyone working in the jute mills of Calcutta or somewhere else, I felt eager for a chat. In Padmapur, we came to know that some families of that village had settled in Brazil, South America. This connection of the remote corners of Orissa with far-off South America thrilled me. I thought that, thus, the whole world would slowly become one.

We returned to Cuttack as the date of Gandhiji's arrival drew near. We had been able to collect donation worth nearly three hundred rupees. Gandhiji came to Anugul via Sambalpur. Its deputy commissioner threatened the public not to help in any way to welcome Gandhi. Girijabhusan Dutta alone arranged for Gandhi's stay by putting up tents etc. But many people from the rural areas came to see Gandhi. Girija babu was a contractor in Anugul. He was a freedom-loving and bold person. Later, he actively participated in the movement against feudatory chiefs in the princely states. Later, on land belonging to him in Anugul, my aunt set up an Ashram.

In the evening, Gandhi travelled to Puri via Cuttack by train from Talcher. His plan was to come to the princely states. He was on a whirlwind lasting seven days. He was to hold meetings in two, three places every day by travelling in a vehicle. But the next day, we were informed that Gandhiji would begin a march on foot from Puri. His plan to travel in a motor car was called off. It was learnt that the local leaders of Puri had arranged for police protection for

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhi after getting information regarding the conspiracy by the priests of the Puri temple to beat Gandhi up. Gandhiji did not like this. We heard that, in order to give greater opportunity to anyone who wanted to beat him up, he had decided to hold a foot march.

On the other hand, people and organizers of all those places which he was to visit felt very upset. Many went to argue with him. But Gandhiji remained firm. A seven-day long foot march from Puri to Cuttack was scheduled. I joined the march at Sakshigopal on the second day. My job was to write down Gandhiji's speeches and take photographs.

Dwijendranath Tagore, the brother of the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had invented a new short-hand writing technique in Bengali and had published a book on it. I had come across a copy, which was with my aunt. I practiced this technique. Actually, I was yet to master it, and my speed was also not that good. But as Gandhiji's Hindi speeches were being translated line by line; I got plenty of time to write them down. After I did so, Gandhiji himself corrected them for the first few days. Then he deemed any more correction unnecessary. I used to give them to Bal Kalekar or someone else for correction.

The foot march covered two and a half to three miles in the morning and the same distance in the afternoon. In the same way, we used to begin after dinner at five or five thirty in the evening. So there was no need to worry about dinner during our night halt. It was summer. Everyone slept in the open. During our stopovers in the daytime, shelters made of coconut or palm fronds were required. Before leaving Gandhiji used to personally see whether the makeshift latrine, dustbin and the left-over food were disposed of properly or not whether everything was cleaned properly or not. He would also ask after the welfare of his co-marchers. He would look after the cooking arrangements, too. Once he heard that a nail had pierced my sister, Chuni's foot. He himself extracted it. On another occasion he was pacified only after learning that the left-over rice would be made

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

into *pakhala* and eaten. During the stopover, the foot marchers used to visit the Harijan quarters and inform Gandhiji about the conditions they lived in. On some days, Harijans from villages nearby were invited for lunch.

A lot of noted persons called on Gandhiji. Several important people from abroad also came to meet him. Kut Buto, a young German from South-east Africa stayed with the foot-marchers from the beginning to the end. He called himself a Nazi. He was one of the attractions of the march. He drank the milk of ten, twelve coconuts at a stretch. Two young Czechoslovaks joined the march at Puri's Siulachowk. Thakkarbapa joined the march from Puri to Cuttack. The deputy secretary of Harijan Sangh, N.R. Malkani marched from Bairi to Bhadrak. Satish Chandra Dasgupta first arrived at Siulachowk. Gandhiji had planned to spend two weeks in Bengal after the Orissa trip. So, Satish babu spent two weeks in Orissa on behalf of Bengal. Gandhiji went to Patna to attend the meeting of the Indian National Congress from Cuttack. He arrived back at Bairi station to begin the second phase of his foot march. The original destination of the march was Balasore. But we had to end the march at Bhadrak as it began raining after the marchers reached Jajpur.

Agatha Harrison, an English woman who was very fond of India, took part in the second phase of the foot march. Piere Sherrysol, a member of Service Civil International, a peacekeeping organization, was in Bihar to help the earthquake-affected people. He also spent a few days with Gandhiji. Minu Masani was then an important leader of the Congress Socialist party. He also came and joined the march for two to three days and held a discussion with Gandhiji. Ghanashyam Birla also came. He arrived at Intaripokhari, the place that proved most inconvenient during the march. Gandhiji was staying in a small hut there. Most of others were staying in a banana plantation. It became difficult to get even a drop of milk for Birlaji there.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

During each stopover, Gandhiji talked to people against untouchability. Rajuda would translate his speeches. Gandhiji would speak one sentence and it would then get translated. The speeches were not very long. He would repeat a few key points every time. People from far-off places came to meet Gandhiji and quite a few would arrive at inconvenient times. During the day, he sat in the open. So there was no problem. But, at night, people often went near his bed and bothered him by flashing lantern and torchlight on his face.

A few incidents come to my mind. Sometimes we stayed in a math or a temple. Gandhi's bed had been placed at five to seven hands away from the wooden fence. Gandhiji was sitting on the bed. My father saw this and said, 'The place is unclean. Harmful creatures may be around. Let's move the bed a little further.' Gandhiji smiled and replied, 'Gopa babu, if there are snakes, can't they go a little further?' The bed remained where it was.

On another afternoon, Gandhiji went and sat in a mango grove to escape the oppressive heat. The trees there were full of insects. They constantly harassed people. When someone complained, Gandhiji commented, 'What's their fault? Had we been insects, we would have done the same.' Satyabhamapur lay at quite a distance from Lekhanpur. It got late. Gandhiji started to run from the Gopinathpur Bridge. He ran for about half a mile. Everyone followed him breathlessly.

Before reaching Jajpur, we were to stay on the banks of river Budha at night. There, when the evening prayer was over, dark clouds gathered and it started to drizzle. There was a small shop. Gandhiji and women, seven to eight in number, took shelter in a small room here. Two seven hands long fence made of coconut fronds were found. We, about twenty-two persons, covered them with a piece of tarpaulin and took shelter under it. While arranging all this, it began raining heavily. The rain continued throughout the night. All of us spent the whole night crouching there and drowsing.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

It rained heavily in Todanga of Balasore district. Bhadrak was eleven miles away. We decided to march non-stop from Todanga to Jibaramaji's Ashram at Bhadrak and then to stay there for two days and bring the Orissa tour to an end. We began walking in the morning and rested a little on the way before reaching Bhadrak in the afternoon.

One morning, during the foot march, Gandhiji, put his arms on my shoulder to steady himself and began to walk. He asked me what I was doing and what I wanted to become in life. I replied that I wanted to study astronomy. He said that I could continue my studies while carrying out other tasks like spinning. I nodded assent. The talk ended with this. In reality, I had no clear-cut idea as to what to do and what not at that time. On one hand, I was taking part in the freedom struggle. I knew I had to remain a part of this struggle. Under the influence of the ideals of Socialism, the hope of a new society was taking shape in my mind. On the other hand, I was curious to learn the various mysteries being solved by Science. But due to my serious and shy nature, I never discussed about these openly with anyone. So how could I have talked about these, even to Gandhiji?

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Lost Silver Coin

Krushna Chandra Kar
Tr. Priyambada Pal

It was the beginning of the month of May in 1934. The streets of Cuttack were full of bustle. One heard the same thing from one and all: Gandhiji would start his journey from Puri and reach Telengapentha at the end of the day. The huge mango orchard at Telengapentha would be his resting place during the night. The orchard would turn into a sacred and memorable site through the touch of the Mahatma's feet. Hundreds of thousands of people, ignoring distinctions of caste, creed, and age, followed Gandhiji in a single file.

The city of Cuttack had come alive. A shiver of joy and pride was felt in every part of its being – the huts, the bungalows, even the dust-particles in the lanes. Hundreds of eager people were getting ready to go to Telengapentha to have a *darshan* of the Mahatma. I also threw myself into the stream of human beings which was rushing towards the river. In a few minutes the clock would strike four. From a distance the new embankment of river Katjuri looked like the bridge built by the army of monkeys of Lord Sri Ram as it was covered from one end to the other with moving heads of people. No matter which direction I looked at, I found frenzied human beings heading straight for the bank of river Katjuri – it seemed as if the entire population of the city would pour into Telengapentha.

The 'naked fakir', the man the whole world revered, arrived in the mango orchard at Telengapentha with his followers. We had reached the place before him. The area, which had recently been

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

devastated by the floods, was now teeming with people. People from far-off villages kept coming in. Makeshift arrangements had been made for the night halt of Gandhiji and his followers. After resting there for some time, they headed straight for the place where the meeting was to be held. Gandhiji began addressing the audience in a tone marked with solemnity. A silence descended over the audience as they listened to the Mahatma, mesmerized. Gandhiji expressed a lot of sympathy for the poor, especially low-caste *harijans*, who were subject to exploitation. This is why he laid so much emphasis on the eradication of untouchability and urged his countrymen to respect them and treat them as their own kith and kin. Gandhiji made it clear that Swaraj held no meaning until the untouchables were accepted as a part of our society.

No sooner had the last rays of the sun faded than the mango orchard got illuminated by countless petromax lamps. The darkness of the night retreated like a thief. When Gandhiji's speech came to an end, some members of the audience rose to ask questions in order to get their doubts clarified. Gandhiji gave satisfactory answers to them all. I remember only one question which was asked in Hindi by the then president of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, Pandit Nilakantha Das. He asked, 'Bapuji, you always preach that we should opt for a vegetarian diet. Please tell us whether it's right for the people of Orissa to eat fish?' Mahatmaji, the epitome of compassion, answered, saying, 'More than half of the population of Orissa don't get to eat a full meal a day. Many of them wander form village to village in search of food. Nature has lavished on them its bounty in the shape of fish in numerous rivers, rivulets, lakes, tanks and streams all over the state. Apart from this, the sea is also replete with fish. The poverty-stricken people of Orissa can pacify their hunger by catching these. For this, they would not have to spend anything. The only thing they would have to do is to exert themselves a little.'

The meeting was followed by a community feast, where hundreds of high and low caste people ate together. What a moving

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

sight this was! The air resounded with the sound of conch-shells, hulahuli and slogans like 'Hail the Mahatma', 'Victory to India' etc. Gandhiji's call to everyone from Kashmir to Kanyakumari made both brahmins and chandalas become one at this sacred place forgetting the restrictions prescribed by the *Vedas*. Gandhiji himself eating among the *harijans* opened a new chapter in the history of India.

Gandhiji and his party returned to their respective tents after the meal. The place, where this august gathering had taken place, now started looking desolate as people started trekking back home. By mid-night the mango orchard became empty.

The few, who stayed back, chose one tree each under which they would spend the night. I searched for a clean resting place but did not succeed in finding any. At last, finding a torn coconut frond in an open place, I thought I would spend the rest of the night peacefully lying on it and enjoy the cool breeze which was blowing in. As I sat down on the frond, the shining edge of something lying in the sand caught my sight. When I picked it up, I found that it was a silver coin stamped with the Queen's head. Although I was overjoyed to find it, my happiness was soon clouded by the apprehension that I might get into trouble. Who does it belong to? Who has lost it? How shall I find out who he is? How will this coin be handed over to its owner? How worried this person must be! – thoughts such as these began to crowd into my mind and made me feel restless. How could I find any sleep in a situation like this? I was sitting on the frond lost in thought when the young Congressman and orator, Rajakrushna Bose made his way to me. Day was about to break. Soon the village cock would get ready to give its shrill wake-up call.

Just as two great leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, came into prominence in Indian National Congress, two dynamic young leaders, Jadumani Mangaraj and Rajakrushna Bose, were beginning to distinguish themselves in the Congress party in Orissa. The warrior-like gait of these two wearing loincloth striding

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

down the streets of Cuttack was a memorable sight. Raj Krushna babu purchased shares in the trading company where I had started my career. Our acquaintance had begun from here and had grown a little more intimate by now.

He read the expression on my face, sensed that I was deeply worried for some reason, and asked, 'Why have you remained awake so late into the night? Are you feeling scared?'

I: Yes.

Bose: Are you feeling scared because this is a lonely and desolate place?

I: No.

Bose: What are you afraid of, then?

I: I'm afraid of an impending danger.

Bose: What's that?

I gave him an elaborate account of the danger which had befallen me. Rajakrushna babu laughed the matter away saying that there was nothing to worry about. I gaped at him as he did not attach any importance to a matter which had caused me so much concern. But, as soon as he explained everything, my apprehensions disappeared just as fire dies out when it is doused with water. Rajkrushna babu said, 'I have been coming straight from Mahadev Deshai (Gandhiji's secretary). When I came out of his tent, I saw you and came here. I found Mahadev babu extremely upset. He is tense for having lost the very thing, finding which has filled you with so much anxiety. Mahadev babu hasn't been able to balance today's accounts. The calculations revealed that one rupee could not be accounted for. No matter how hard he tries, he fails to recollect how it was spent. When Gandhiji was in the meeting, Mahadev babu made all monetary transactions from the cash-box sitting on this coconut frond. The coin that you found lying in the sand must have fallen from Mahadev babu's hands and would have got buried in the sand. Now come with me to his tent and give the coin to him – this will definitely cure the headache that both of you have got.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

I felt immensely relieved after getting the problem out of the way. I had great difficulty in keeping pace with Raj Krushna babu's brisk pace of walking. Reaching our destination, we found Mahadev babu sitting motionless, like a sage deep in meditation. He was lost in thought, his hands propping up his cheeks. I came forward from behind Rajkrushna babu and bowed to him. Mahadev babu responded to my greetings. I placed the lost property in his hands. He was amazed seeing the glittering coin in his hand, and looked askance at Rajkrushna babu. Introducing me to Mahadev babu, Rajkrushna babu told him how I had come by the coin. Mahadev babu thanked me profusely. Not content with this, he insisted that he would introduce me to Gandhiji when he would finish his morning ablutions and prayer and narrate to him the story of the recovery of the lost silver coin. He said that he would also request Gandhiji to write on this event which took place in Telengapentha in the magazine published by him. That would help in building the character of the citizens of our country.

After leaving Mahadev babu's marquee, Rajkrushna babu and I went in different directions – I returned to my earlier resting place and rested myself lying on the coconut frond while Rajkrushna babu joined the other members of his group.

There was no question of my trying to get some asleep. I kept tossing form one side to the other, eyes wide open, waiting all the while eagerly to meet the Mahatma. At this time, the bell in the Ashram rang announcing the break of day. Everyone including Gandhiji left their beds to finish their ablutions as Mahatmaji was to leave Telengapentha and begin his next journey.

The bell made me wake up with a start. I sat on the frond for a while to muster enough courage. But my impatience did not let me sit quietly for long – it took me straight to Mahadev Desai's tent. Gandhiji's morning prayer was about to end at that time. Mahadev babu had already informed him about the coin. Now he led me to Gandhiji.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

When feelings of respect and fear are aroused in the mind at the same time, people consider themselves to be as worthless as a blade of grass and throw themselves on the ground. When I prostrated myself before the world teacher, Mahatma Gandhi, I considered myself to be as lucky as a lotus which rises from the mud. In a soft tone Gandhiji said –

'I was moved to hear about your clear conscience and commendable character from Mahadevji. If people like you increase in number, awareness societies for the young could set up in every corner of our country and reform the national character. If this could happen, the India of my dreams would take shape very soon. Although a utopia is something heavenly, it does not come from the heaven – it has to take birth and develop in the soil of India. When the people of India – whether a king or his subjects, the ruler or the ruled – would become truthful, religious and honest, India would get transformed into a utopia.

Drinking the nectar of Bapuji's words, I touched his feet and took leave. When I came out, the flimsy net of darkness was quickly giving way to the crimson rays of the dawn. Hundreds of people had gathered under the canopy of the mango orchard, ready to accompany Gandhiji in the next leg of his journey and many more were still making a bee-line to this new shrine, not bothering in the least about the hindrances they might have to come up against on the way.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhi's March on Foot

Binod Kanungo
Tr. Arun Mohanty

We passed through Pipili and Siulachaka and reached Balakati. A large crowd had collected there. Thousands of people including priests and some influential persons, who had come from Bhubaneswar, pressed Bapuji to go to the town. However, Bapuji refused to change his plans. The crowd had swelled when we crossed the river. There was a cloud of dust that prevented us from seeing things clearly. A meeting was held on the riverbed. Seven, eight thousand people attended it. Balakati is famous for bell-metal and brass utensils. A few pieces of these were presented to Bapuji.

After the crowd grew quiet, Bapuji addressed them saying, 'Human vanity lies at the root of untouchability. Like tuberculosis, untouchability consumes human beings. We must not allow ourselves to become victims of this disease. The whole world is watching us. If we do not wash this sin away, people will despise us.'

'I do not need money. A paise or even a *pahula* is enough. A paise given by a poor man of Orissa is more valuable than a rupee.'

'Caste Hindus should not commit the sin of looking at anyone as an untouchable. It is mentioned in the *Bhagbad Gita*, in the *Mahabharata* and in all the sacred scriptures that God protects the person who is despised and forsaken by others. When the Pandavas forsook Draupadi and left her utterly helpless, God came to her rescue. Ramchandra brought to life Ahalya, who was lying petrified. One forsaken by one's fellow men becomes god's own.'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

We reached Satyabhamapur. Mirabehn, who accompanied us, was not used to walking long distances. Her legs ached. She wound a piece of cloth around her legs and walked. A meeting was held in a grove. Bapuji discussed a lot of things with the villagers.

At Satyabhamapur, Gandhiji came across scenes of acute poverty. People donated to the Hajijan fund whatever they could. A poor man wanted to donate something. He was under the impression that if he donated to the Mahatma, he would earn merit and be saved. But he had nothing to give. He begged a paisa from a zamindar and gave it to the Mahatma. Children of the village raised a sum of thirteen rupees, which they donated to the Harijan find.

People kept waiting all day long to have a glimpse of Gandhiji. A crowd had gathered. Women from far-off places had arrived, riding bullock carts. Gandhiji found that all who had assembled there were spending their time idly. He asked the women workers to take to spinning in the afternoon. He called people over and told them, 'See, you are spending your time idly. Our people are so poor that when our women volunteers approach them for donation, they give only a *pahula.* This is because they have so little. They are desperately poor. And how can we afford to sit idle?'

There was a large Harijan quarter in Satyabhamapur. Wherever Bapuji camped, he instructed people to invite Harijans to dine with them. Accordingly, invitations were extended to the Bhois, who assured us that they would come. However, no one turned up at lunch time. It was found that they would not come because they came to know that people who belonged to Pana and Kandara castes had touched the food to be served to them. True, Bauris were Harijans and upper-caste Hindus did not touch them. But, after all, they were superior to Panas and Kandaras. They were afraid of losing their caste, if they ate the food touched by such low-caste people. Gandhiji was shocked when he learnt of this. People were so scared by of losing their caste that they would not come to dine with them even if you invited them with love and sincerity.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Mango trees were infested with insects called *ambadani* in summer. Gandhiji camped in a mango grove. The scorching heat coupled with the trouble *ambadani*s gave him made Gandhiji restless. He came to a banyan tree, and sat under it.

A Bauri who was striken with leprosy, did not dare come close to Gandhiji. He only looked at anxiously from a distance. Gandhiji called him over and made enquires about his illness. He sent for the doctor at Bhingarpur and asked him to give the man medicines. He also offered him food and clothes.

Harijans Enter a Temple

A special correspondent of *The Samaj* had given a defailed account of Gandhiji's march on foot. The previous night, people from distant places had come to Balianta. Many had travelled all the way from Cuttack and gathered there to take part in the *padayatra.* On behalf of the residents of Cuttack, Bidyaratna Balukeswar Acharya, Lingaraj babu and Satyanarayan babu had come to congratulate the *padayatri*s.

So many people participated in the *padayatra* that the air was filled with dust. A coat of dust lay on everyone's clothes. With the help of six volunteers Mahatab and Gopa babu ran ahead of the others in order to clear the way. Bapuji also started running like a child. Hundreds of people shouted 'Haribol' and followed him breathlessly.

At Balianta, a ceremony allowing Harijans to enter a temple was to be held. The owners of the temple had agreed to throw the temple open to Harijans. But Gandhiji wanted to seek the opinion of the Hindus who regularly paid worship at the temple and were present there. At the beginning, he made it clear that only caste Hindus, who supported the idea, should raise their hands to signal their approval. Harijans need not raise their hands. Then he declared, 'From today, the temple is open to Harijans. I have not yet seen image of the deity.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

I have been told that the image is very beautiful. Now I shall enter the temple and set my eyes on it.'

'We should explain to people the idea of the temple which we have cherished since time immemorial. In the past, a temple was everything to us. Inside a temple, we could not think of committing an act of sin. Monks and rishis practised meditation there; the whole atmosphere was so holy that no ugly thought crossed our mind while there. A *pathasala* was attached to the temple. In the temple premises, children were taught the alphabet. Besides, Sanskrit was taught to scholars who wanted to become Pandits. It was a place where one could find noble company. Those great souls always had people's good in mind. *Dharmasalas* attached to the temples catered to the needs of the poor. The temple was associated with every auspicious occasion. I hope, the custodians of this temple would manage it keeping all this in mind. When a temple decays, religion also decays. Who will deny that Hinduism has decayed? Priests do not know Sanskrit. They are blinded by selfishness. One rarely comes across a *pathasala* attached to a temple these days. Thoughts which should fill one's mind when one enters a temple do not cross one's mind any more. Our lives have become as empty as the temple itself.'

'Everyone should offer prayers to God either in the evening or at bedtime. One should seek His forgiveness for the sins committed during the day. One should clean one's inner self when one gets up in the morning. As one needs food for the body, one also needs to pray to God for one's soul. The experience is really wonderful.'

He narrated the incident of the Harijans of Satyabhamapur not turning up even though they had accepted the invitation to a dinner. He said, 'There was nothing to be afraid of. We would have cooked food for them and fed them. The poor fellows did not know what to do. We are responsible for the kind of attitude they have today. We have taught them to divide humanity into the high and the low. We have scriptural prescription as to where to take food and where not to take it. Harijans, who take the leftover food of caste

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Hindus do not take the food offered to them with a clean heart. If we do not step out of this darkness, both we and our religion would be in peril. This is why we have undertaken this *yatra.* I shall go on repeating this as long as I am alive.'

At the end of the meeting, Gandhiji went to the temple to have *darshan* of the Lord. *Prasad* was distributed among everyone present.

The East and the West

In the beginning we were afraid that Gandhiji might take ill during the *padayatra.* Almost always he found himself in the middle of a crowd. His body was often covered with dust. At times he had to go without food because he did not find any respite from people. He had given up taking orange juice. Inspite of all this, he gained five pounds in weight. In his own words, 'The experience of this *yatra* has been wonderful.'

The enthusiasm of people reached a climax when they reached Telengapentha and Kajipatna. Hundreds of people from Cutack had arrived there riding bicycles. They had carried their food with them. Women from Cuttack had also come.

The felicitation given to Bapuji read as follows: 'Untouchability is practiced there; the heart has also grown hard.' Bapuji quoted the sentence and observed, 'There is nothing surprising about this. We have forsaken crores of people treating them like beasts. We have become unjust to them and are not behaving properly with them. What else could be crueler than this? As a result, there will be no unity among us, and conflict and discord will increase. Untouchability is the cruellest form of human behaviour. I say this because it has received religious sanction. There was a time when it was not possible to say so in a meeting. By God's grace, today so many people from villages have come here to listen to me. They are now convinced that untouchability is not sanctioned by religion; but they are not prepared to change their age-old habits. This cruelty has

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

left its mark on all aspects of our lives. I warn you: If we do not give up this cruel habit, God will never forgive us and we will be doomed. I know that in every village Harijan students go to school. But they are asked to sit apart. Neither the teacher nor parents are ashamed of themselves because of this arrangement. It holds out very wrong ideals to students. What is being taught to students? Something they would have never dreamt of is taught to them in schools. I call upon all my brothers and sisters not to remain in peace until this nasty practice is discontinued. Had the Harijans been a little more aware, they would have made it impossible for others to practise untouchability.'

'It has been said in the felicitation that the East and the West are distinct from each other and would never meet. It has also been said that I am a proponent of this idea. I do not want to do such a thing. This is not a word of praise for me. In fact, if I have done so, I should be taken to task. I believe in the Adwaita. I do not recognise any distinction between the East and the West, between the North and the South. How can one? How could someone, who wants to do away with distinctions between the high and the low could ever become an enemy of the West? Since my childhood I have been a stranger to such a view; I have never thought of it even in my dreams.'

'I have said it earlier and I now repeat it: we need not imitate the West. Self-indulgence is given priority in western civilization whereas the civilization of the East lays emphasis on sacrifice. The *Upanishads* say that one has to renounce worldliness in order to live meaningfully in this world. It does not admit of a distinction between the East and the West. It was only a distinction between attitudes. Thousands from the West agree with what I told you today, and also way back in 1908. If I have the right to tell you this, I shall tell you: Do away with the distinction between the East and the West. To eradicate untouchability is to eradicate the distinction between the high and the low. Our Harijan brothers are only a pretext. I invite you all to offer yourselves to this *mahajajna.*'

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Kajipatna lies on one side of the Katjuri and Cuttack, on the other. Gandhiji had no plans to stay at Cutack. It had been arranged that, after the meeting, he would go straight to the station. This is why he was felicitated at Kajipatna on behalf of the people of Cuttack.

A novel method was worked out to save him from being harassed by crowds. *Bhajans* were sung on the way from Telengapentha to Cuttack. People showered flowers on the way. Women, who had come from Cuttack, donated their ornaments, which the old man himself got auctioned.

The filigree work of Cuttack is famous all over the world. Bapuji was very happy to see the artifacts. On behalf of Bhikari babu's cottage industry, Harihar Mohapatra presented Bapuji with a quantity of tusser threads, a few toys and a map of India. On the way back from the meeting, he invited Bapuji to visit the factory. Bapuji gladly agreed to go. Hari babu sought to clear his doubts about leather industry. When Bapuji started his Harijan movement, a rumour had spread that cowhide and poultry businesses would be discouraged. As a result, poor people, who depended on this to make a living, suffered. When Hari babu told of this to Gandhiji, he said, 'It is wrong to do so. I would advise them to continue trading in leather. But I would not advise them to take up poultry farming.'

He was told that people engaging in poultry farming make a good profit. They did not need a large capital. However, Bapuji was not convinced when he was told that eggs could be produced without breeding and such eggs, which are devoid of any life, could be as nutritious as ordinary eggs. Bapuji said, 'In that case, I have no objection at all. But can they do it?' When Malati Devi told him that it was being done easily at Shantiniketan, he said, 'Well. If this can be done, Harijans and others my take up this business.'

When the impact of Gandhiji's Harijan tour came to be widely felt, a few orthodox Hndus felt unnerved. A Sanatanist named Lalnath showed black flags to Gandhiji at several places in the country. He had also come to Cuttack. He had mobilized a few men and some

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

flags. But he came to realize that if he organised a protest at Cuttack, people might become furious and do him harm. He was advised to come straight to Kajipatna, and, if the need arose, special volunteers would be employed to guard him and he would be given a chance to have his say. Helping someone who wanted to show black flags to him is possible only on the part of one who worships the Truth.

In the evening, with great effort, he was brought to the sands of Katjuri at Kajipatna. A huge crowd had assembled. It seemed as if Cuttack town had poured itself into the Katjuri sands that day.

Earlier, Lalnath had been assured that he would be given a chance to speak. Before addressing the gathering, Gandhiji looked for him. He was nowhere to be seen. Gandhiji was worried for a while. It was noticed that twenty to twenty-five men, black flags in hand, were descending the banks of the river. Gandhiji said, 'Pandit Lalnath and his friends from Kashi have come to Cuttack. They may try to show us black flags. If they do so, do not blame them. Treat them with respect and humility. Allow them to take their seats wherever they like. If they want to come here, let them do so.'

The crowd was so large that it was not easy for Lalnath and his friends to push their way through it and come to the spot. The police were there to give them protection in the event of people beating them up. Although people felt annoyed, they kept quiet.

Satyanarayan babu had taken a seat on the dais. Bapuji sent him to lead Lalnath and others there. They sang a song, 'Let us die on the threshold of our temple' and came to the meeting. Lalnath was sweating when he came there. Bapuji bowed his head, smiled and said, 'Pandit Lalnath, about whom I was telling you, has arrived. Let him address you. I shall speak to you after he finishes his speech. Please listen to him as attentively as you listened to me.'

Lalnath rose to speak. There was silence. People called him a hooligan because he opposed the entry of low-caste people to the temple. He was ready to quote from scriptures to support his point of view.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Bapuji thanked the crowd because they listened to Lalnath attentively. 'Pandit Lalnath told us a couple of things. He who has called him a hooligan was wrong. I am sorry if a reformer has called him so. Pandit Lalnath and his friends have every right to influence me and change my heart. On my part, I shall also try to change their heart. Please help me in my effort. He has told us that I have caused pain to the Sanatanists. But, in my opinion, I am a Sanatanist. I am not opposed to debate and discussion. On the other hand, the opposite is true. I have always tried to discuss the matter with them. If they can change my heart, I shall accept their point of view.'

'The (Congress) workers of Orissa have shouldered a great responsibility by inviting me here for the second time. The workers as well as villagers should work in a dedicated way to make this movement a success. If Hindus have doubts about the Harijan movement, they should humbly dispel their doubts.'

A bag was presented to Gandhiji. The meeting came to an end after giving away certificates to the candidates who had passed the Hindi examination.

A meeting of women had been arranged at Shri Ramchandra Bhavan. Sarala Devi read out a welcome note after which Bapuji addressed the gathering. Thereafter, he proceeded to visit Bhikari babu's cottage industry. It took quite some time to show him all the sections.

By this time, five six thousand people had gathered outside. It was thought that if everyone accompanied Gandhiji to the station Cuttack might get covered in red dust. Without informing the crowd, Gandhiji went down a different route. A small torchlight, a lantern and only a few men accompanied him. The crowd dispersed. That night Gandhiji boarded a train and went to Patna to attend a meeting of the All Indian Congress Committee.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Lesson for Life

Binod Kanungo

Tr. Zehara Jabeen

In 1934 Bapuji toured Orissa to work for the uplift of harijans. This tour had an importance all its own. The epithet 'shrewd' given to Gandhiji by British officers in India was apt to some extent but it signified the exact opposite of what they meant. By 1934, Gandihji had understood very well that people were worn out and weary. The freedom struggle of 1932 had led nowhere. Political propaganda and meetings would again lead to many arrests – even Gandhiji himself could get arrested. He had been arrested several times earlier. When in jail, he would go on a fast on any pretext and would then be released from jail. It was not Gandhiji's intention to play a cat and mouse game like this. He had to find a new direction: he would have to renew his contact with people. A way had to be devised to encourage more people to come and attend public meetings. He therefore announced that he would tour the whole of India and spread the message of the eradication of untouchability. As he was not espousing a political cause, the government would have no reason to stop him although they were not quite happy about it. He was scheduled to come to Orissa in May 1934. He would travel from Madhya Pradesh to Sambalpur. From Sambalpur he would travel by car through Angul to the railway station at Meramundali. From there he would board the Talcher train and reach Puri. In those days, *The Samaj* was the only daily published in Orissa. Lingaraj Mishra was its editor. Radhanath Ratha also worked with him. The daily did not have anyone who specialised in reporting on its staff. The two of them

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

decided that someone should accompany Gandhi wherever he went. The speeches and the details of his tour would be given extensive coverage in *The Samaj*. However, they could not find such a person. They decided that I could do this job and made this proposal. I had already decided to stay with Gandhiji and learn from him. The organizers would agree to allow me to work as a volunteer. I got ready as soon as I received this proposal.

I took the telegram authority and a reporter's card with me and travelled to Angul as Gandhiji had already left Sambalpur. From there he came to Puri by train. At Puri he declared, 'I shall not travel any more by train or by motor car. I shall march on foot for the uplift of Harijans.'I called this 'the Great March.' Every day, he covered a little distance and held a public meeting. He would rest in the afternoon till four o clock, and would resume his march. There would be another meeting in the evening and he would stay for the night. Thakkar Bapa (Amritlal V. Thakur) was entrusted with the management of the march. My responsibility increased to a great extent. Every day there would be speeches. Two or three rounds of discussion were held among the workers, and I was especially instructed by the editors to report in detail the several incidents that occurred during the march. Even though Thakkar Bapa was in overall charge of the march, Gopabandhu Choudhury and Ramadevi assisted him. Eminent leaders from all over Orissa and many well-known workers walked with Gandhiji some distance. It was my good fortune that I was asked to shoulder another responsibility. Gopabandhu Chudhury said, 'When Bapuji walks, a lot of people crowd in front of him. This not only raises a lot of dust, it also hampers his walk. You walk in front of Bapuji. Two volunteers on walking either side will help you, so that some open space remains in front of Bapuji. At night, you will have to stay near Bapuji's resting place; otherwise those eager to see him will not allow him to get any sleep.'

When Bapuji walked he would place his hands on the shoulders of two people on either side. He would engage them in important

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

discussions. If they were volunteers, he would enquire about the villages. The march from Puri to Bhadrak lasted more than a month. The rainy season began and the march came to an end. One day Masani (M.R.Masani) came. After two days came Ghanshyam Das Birla. Gandhiji held important discussions with them. When they spoke Hindi or English I would prick my ears to listen to a few words. Of course, he spoke to these two men in Gujrati.

While narrating these incidents I have an important point to make. It was an honour to be able to listen to the words of Bapu for so many days. After the meeting held in the morning he would meet groups of people. The instructions he gave them were very important. On several occasions, I had to serve as an interpreter. People would raise different questions. Bapuji would not lose his patience in the least and would answer their questions. In the afternoon, he would hold discussions with the workers from Orissa and with those who came from outside. These discussions were always very enlightening. I got the opportunity to ask a few questions. On the whole, it was like undergoing a training programme. The reports sent by me were published verbatim by *The Samaj*. I became adept at reporting. Thakkar Bapa, Lala Anantaram etc. would read *The Samaj* reports in translation to find out how the padyatra was covered. They would also praise me. A year after Bapuji's death I published a book about this padyatra. This book provides a detailed account of this historic march. People have suggested that I should also publish its Hindi and English translations adding a few more details to it. Once, Bapuji scolded me in the course of this march. His rebuke was filled with love and blessings for me. It taught me the importance of discretion in reporting incidents.

Bapuji was staying for the day at Dhawanad Indupur in Kendrapara. It had been earlier decided that Bapuji would hold a discussion on untouchability with a few Hindu Pandits. It was Gandhiji's wish to hold a meeting like this. The Pandits tried to justify their view that a group of people should be treated as untouchables.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

They quoted shlokas from the scriptures. At one point they said: Pans and Hadis eat beef. How can we touch them? Bapuji said, "Christians and Muslims do not prohibit the eating of beef, even if some Muslim and Christians do not eat beef. Why do Hindus touch them? Let us not talk about them. I know —. He is a Hindu leader. When he travels to England he eats beef. But he is not expelled from Hindu community. He said this with such emphasis that the Pandits kept quiet. The discussion continued for some time.

The name of that leader was mentioned in the report that I sent to *The Samaj*. It would have been printed as it was. Incidentally it came to the knowledge of the editor, Pandit Lingaraj Mishra. He struck off the name and added this in parenthesis: Our reporter had mentioned the name of an eminent Hindu leader. The name has not been revealed here. I thought the matter had ended here. Pandit Lingaraj met Bapuji on the way to Bari. When the three of us were sitting together, this topic came up for discussion. Bapuji asked, 'Did you mention the name?' Panditji said no and asked immediately, 'Bapuji you did not mention that name? Binod sent this name to me.' I shivered. Bapuji said, 'Yes, I did. But Binod, you should not have sent it at once. Of course, I had mentioned that name, and I hadn't asked you not to report the matter. But you should have known that this discussion meant for public consumption. You should have asked me whether or not to disclose his name.' The matter ended there but I learnt a very important lesson. I have been engaged in reporting for many years now but I know how to exercise caution and I have not repeated this mistake. This is why I said in the beginning that Gandhiji's reprimand contained his blessings.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhi Darshan

Basanta Kumar Satpathy
Tr. Sumanyu Satpathy

It was 1934. An earthquake had recently devastated Bihar. Gandhi's declaration that, 'The practice of untouchability is the root cause of this natural calamity' baffled the masses. Why did the Almighty single out Bihar when the whole of India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari practiced the evil? Surely, the statement was a piece of Gandhian philosophy that was beyond the masses. Still, they craved for a *darshan* of the Mahatma, especially the people of Orissa, yet to be carved out as a separate province. First, Gandhi was deeply touched by the poverty of Orissa, and loved it. Besides, unlike the people of other regions, Oriyas did not often get a chance to see him.

Since educational institutions were administered from Patna, their examinations were postponed due to the earthquake from February to June. Now it was May. A few of us were waiting for that fateful month, sweating out the sweltering heat and humidity of a Cuttack mid-summer.

Around this time, news spread that Gandhi was to pass through Cuttack on his way to Puri. He would be travelling from Angul by the train from Talcher. In those days, one often heard of Dhenkanal and Talcher in Cuttack. After all, servants, coolies, labourers, and rickshaw-pullers came to the only city of Orissa from these two rural areas; just as nowadays, dhobis, hoteliers and rickshaw-pullers hail from down south. This was an excellent opportunity for the people of Cuttack to catch a glimpse of the great man. Their enthusiasm for

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

a *darshan* of the Mahatma was as great as ever. It was, however, not easy for them to realize their dream.

My case was even worse. After all, five years previously, my high-school headmaster had punished me for having plotted a protest march against Gandhi's arrest. In a poem entitled 'Janmasthami' I had portrayed the Britisher as Kamsa; and the hand-printed magazine carrying the poem was confiscated. I had also been an eyewitness to the merciless beating up of a few Gandhian protesters, who, by lying on the road, were trying to stop the bullock cart carrying British clothes. The paan-shop owner, who tried to unrse one of the hapless victims by offering him a glass of water, was also beaten up mercilessly. This was the high noon of the British Empire, on which the sun never set. Would the school authorities be ignorant of the fact that Gandhi was passing by? If they ignored our attempts to catch a glimpse of the biggest threat to the Empire, might it not harm their own position? Yet, since time immemorial, school and college students have derived great pleasure by hoodwinking the authorities. Sometimes they have also become famous by doing so.

It was almost eight o' clock in the evening. About two-hundred-odd people had gathered in the dimly lit platform boasting of three lanterns. A loud cheer greeted the pealing third bell. As the train puffed into the platform, there was even a louder cheer. The enthusiastic crowd ran helter-skelter even before the train came to a halt. Presently, they gathered round a particular third class coach through one of the windows Gandhi's serene face emerged to the chorus of 'Gandhiji ki jai!' Far from being pleased with the reception, Gandhiji issued a stern rebuke: 'The *shastras* prohibit the making of noise at night.' A hush descended on the platform. 'No one has the right to break the silence of the night', he added.

Since his face was indistinct in the pale light, someone held up a lantern, tied to a lathi, close to Gandhi's face. The Mahatma seemed unperturbed by the soot and the stink from the kerosene flame. He said:

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

'I am going to Puri to eradicate untouchability. On my way back I shall again pass through Cuttack. Now I am raising funds for the Harijans. Oriyas are very poor. I do not expect big donations from them. The smallest denomination will count.' So saying, he held out his long hand. That animated the crowd to such an extent that the delicately balanced lantern crashed. Volunteers cleared the mess.

I noticed that people enthusiastically took out whatever money they had, and pushed them into Gandhiji's hand. While doing so, they ran their hand over his arm, as if they were touching God. Not to be left behind, I lunged forward. But to my utter dismay, I realized that my pockets were empty.

I ran for my life, heading straight towards my hostel nearby. On the way, I bumped into my friend, and borrowing some coins from him, sprinted back to the station. The big toe of my right foot hit a stone. Undeterred, I ran on. When I reached the station, I saw to my utter relief that the train was still there, as was Gandhiji's outstretched hand; only the signal had turned green. Breathless, I put the borrowed coins in Gandhiji's huge hands, and ran my hand over his long arm. What an exhilarating experience! It was no different from the feeling that an earlier *darshan* and touch of Lord Jagannath of Puri had induced in me.

Back in the hostel, and still in a daze, I washed my feet. It was then that I noticed my blood-smeared foot, with the big toe bleeding profusely. All of a sudden, an acute pain gripped me. Yet, the damage had been done a while ago. Why had I not felt it for so long? I wondered. It dawned on me then that the mind controlled the body. Whether love was divine or human, a mind in love never succumbs to the command of the body. When inspired by an ideal, man is free from bodily pain.

My wound healed, but the split toenail was now a permanent mark. Later in life, whenever anyone asked me about it, I would

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

retell the story; my face would make it abundantly clear that on each retelling I relived the original moments of bliss.

Almost a week passed. Gandhiji had promised to return to Cuttack. All kinds of news kept trickling in about his movements: That the old man and his wife had a tiff over Kasturba's visit to lord Jagannath, without obtaining Gandhi's permission. Consequently, he had refused to go for a *darshan* himself. The *padyatra*, or march which had then started from Puri resulted in Mirabehn getting blisters on her feet. However, she continued to walk with her bandaged feet. There was also the news about how a Hindu fundamentalist, one Pandit Lalanath, representing the Hindu Mahasabha, had been dogging Gandhi.

It was the 16th of May. Gandhi had reached Kajipatna, where a girl had presented a memento to him along with her gold bangles. By sundown he was expected to reach Cuttack, and on arrival he would speak at a rally on the sandy banks of the river Katjuri. To me this meant another opportunity to have yet another *darshan* of Gandhi. Far from healing, the bandaged wound on my big toe had turned septic. Yet I had reached the sands by 4.30 in the afternoon. The cool water in the river weakened the pinch of the strong sun.

The arrangements for the rally were nondescript. One or two desks had been placed in a haphazard manner. Long ropes had been tied to demarcate separate spaces for men and women. An audience of no more than two, three hundred people had gathered for the occasion. At close proximity lay the lean and shallow river Katjuri; there, at a distance stood the blue Naraj hill; and not so far off shone bunches of *arakh* flowers on an islet.

The sun was beginning to mellow. Everyone's attention was turned towards Kajipatna. Suddenly a small group of people appeared at a distance, as they descended from the low embankment down a fair-weather footpath, and on to the riverbed. As they came closer, one could notice a palm-leaf umbrella, and close to it, strode the unmistakable figure of Gandhiji. One could easily recognize him

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

even from a distance. When on his *padayatra*, he walked with distinct, measured and rhythmic strides, like a child. He reached the venue of the rally in about fifteen minutes. As Gandhi sat on one of the tables, crossing his legs, and leant against one of his hands, he looked exactly the same as we had seen him in pictures. He began by saying, 'One has to take the name of God before embarking on every single good act.' Hardly had he uttered these words when the whole lifeless atmosphere was electrified. By then the sun god had come down to touch the Naraj peak. The cool Katjuri breeze had started blowing ever so gently. In unison with the breeze, Gandhi went on to recite in feminine voice some verse from the second chapter of *The Gita*, highlighting the immortality of the soul and the triumph of the spirit. At once an ambience betokening the aura that surrounds a hermit's hut was created. Rarely has one experience such thrill as that in one's life. After the prayer, Gandhi spoke briefly on the subject of untouchability. More than the subject, his manner of speaking kept everyone enthralled. As soon as he finished speaking, the volunteers went around with outstretched pieces of cloth collecting donations. Everyone was surprised to see so much money being collected so soon in such times of scarcity. In those days there was nothing that people would not give to Gandhi.

At the end of this, Gandhi said, 'Pandit Lalanath had sought my permission to speak at today's rally. I have given him permission. I hope you will listen to him as quietly as you did me. He will be here any time.' Truly enough, we could see at a distance the fundamentalist Pandit Lalanath, with a tonsured head, advancing with a bunch of his followers. They were busy doing some *sankirtan* as they walked. Some of them were carrying black flags, earthen pots painted with black and white marks, stubs of broomsticks stuck to sticks, and dancing to the tune of the *kirtan*. What strange religion! What cacophony! What weird excitement!

Panditji had barely reached the venue with his followers when the crowd advanced menacingly towards them and pelted whatever

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

came handy, including fistfuls of sand, at them. In a moment they had broken all the earthen pots, and completely dispersed the motley group. Even Pandit Lalanath was nowhere to be seen. Gandhiji was quite perturbed. He asked the volunteers to fetch Panditji respectfully to the venue. In fact, he himself escorted back Panditji and seating him, dusted and cleaned his eyes and face, and put him at ease. Then, addressing the crowd, he said, 'In spite of my prior request, you have insulted our guest and thereby committed a grievous offence. Therefore, I am begging forgiveness of God on your behalf.' I was reminded of the *Bible*: 'Oh Father! Pardon these men. They know not what they are doing!'

Presently, Pandit Lalanath raised his hands, and in a shrill voice sang the glory of *Sanatan dharma*. We had thought that Gandhi had committed the same mistake that Brutus had committed by allowing Antony to speak. But neither Pandit Lalanath's oration nor his argument touched anyone. Rather, his extremist rhetoric irritated everyone. The rally ended at dusk. Dumbstruck, we saw Gandhi and Lalanath walking together shoulder to shoulder, towards Cuttack. Love your enemy; respect an opposite point of view; atone for someone else's sin: We saw in our own eyes the practical application of all these principles and precepts.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Hindi Teacher Meets Gandhi

Anusaya Prasad Pathak
Tr. Priyambada Pal

All the prisoners in Bihar were set free in 1934 on account of the earthquake. Gandhiji was going to visit Orissa to work for the uplift of the Harijans. 'I will meet him.' I promised to myself.

I awaited his arrival eagerly. He arrived on time and headed straight for Puri. I received the news that Gandhiji would begin his march from there. The march was called *Harijan Padyatra.* Now I felt assured that at last I would be able to meet him. So I went there one day.

I reached Sakshigopal and called on Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's secretary. I said to him, 'I want to meet Gandhiji.'

Mahadev bhai said, 'He has a lot of work to do; it won't be possible for him to spare any time for you.'

I did not like what he said. I thought to myself, 'He has time to spare only for important people, but no time for someone like me.' I waited to meet him. I do not know what led me to make my way towards his room. I had not planned anything. I saw Mirabehn serving him food. Gandhiji looked at the door. I said breathlessly, 'I am working at popularizing Hindi here. I want to discuss a few problems with you. Please spare some time for me.'

Gandhiji said, 'You can stay here. We will talk tomorrow on the way when the march begins.'

I bowed my head, paid my respects to him and left. This conversation must not have taken more than 30 to 40 seconds.

Nobody knew anything about this, as I did not tell anyone that Gandhiji had asked me to meet him the next day. I stayed back and

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

was given dinner. I did not face any inconvenience during my stay as Rama Devi was in charge of cooking that day.

I doubted whether Gandhiji would remember the appointment. If he forgot it, my work would remain unfinished. I told myself, 'Dear Pathak, go back to Cuttack. You are a teacher of Hindi.' 'There is nothing to eat at home, and mother is going to a feast.' As Kabir says – '*Chahiye amiya par jure na chachu.*' I spent all night trying to decide whether I should stay or leave. My main problem was how I would remind Gandhiji of his promise to spare a little time for me.

After breakfast, Gandhiji himself told Gopa babu, 'Please bring in the man who is working to popularize Hindi in Orissa.'

I was amazed at his sharp memory. I could not believe that in the midst of so much tension, he found time to remember my request. When I went to meet him, I found Baba Raghab Das talking to him. He said, 'Bapuji, we are going to form a committee for popularizing Hindi at Puri tomorrow.'

'I will send someone who will popularize Hindi.'

'All right,' said Gandhiji, 'what do you want to tell me?' he asked me.

'I have been popularizing Hindi for two years now. A committee has already been formed.' Then I mentioned the names of the members of the committee.

Gandhiji said, 'Baba Raghabji, all the members from Orissa are there in his committee. He is doing what is needed to be done, so there is no need to set up yet another committee. More committees will not serve any useful purpose.' (Looking at me) 'Yes, is there anything else that you want to say?'

I said, 'I am doing the work but no arrangements have been made to help me support myself. I have to teach Hindi wandering from house to house and take my meals in people's houses.'

Gandhiji looked at me intently and said, 'I will do something about arranging financial support for you if nothing has been done about it yet. Come with me to Bhadrak. Basantlal Murar is expected

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

to meet me there. I will ask him to donate some money. How much will do?'

I said, 'Any amount would do, twenty rupees, thirty rupees or even forty.'

Gandhiji – I will make sure you get paid, what else is there to discuss?

I pleaded, 'Six students appeared at the Hindi Sahitya Sammilani Examination this year. Out of them, five have been declared successful. I would like you to distribute the prizes and certificates to them.'

Gandhiji – I will do so. Can we do this at Cuttack?

'Yes sir.' I replied. My eyes filled. What a great thing I had achieved! My heart brimmed with happiness when I thought about it. I have no words to express how I had felt at that moment.

I asked, 'But how shall I meet you in Bhadrak? Your companions will never allow me to meet you.'

Gandhiji answered, smiling, 'You can come straight to me whenever you see me with Mr. Basant Lal. I will tell them not to stop you.'

Gandhiji gave me an affectionate look when we parted. I cannot describe that look through mere words. But the memory of that moment is still fresh in my mind. The fatherly affection that look expressed made me ecstatic. This was the biggest achievement in my life. Everything that I had asked for was granted to me. I had nothing more to ask for. Whatever else I had wanted to say, I forgot completely because I was borne away by a river of love.

Gandhiji came to Cuttack as promised. Students received awards and certificates from him. But he took away all the books for an auction in order to raise funds for the uplift of the Harijans. I cannot remember exactly how much money was collected through the auction, but the last bid was probably eight hundren rupees.

I did not join Gandhiji's march but reached Bhadrak the day I was expected to meet him. It was morning. Some people had gathered

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

in the field in front of Sri Harekrushna Mahatab's house. I saw Sri Basant Lal Murar sitting next to Gandhiji. So I headed straight towards him. No one stopped me on the way. I had hardly reached him when Gandhiji told Mr. Basant Lal, 'He is popularizing Hindi in Orissa but is not paid for the work. Should I arrange his salary or you will look into the matter? He asks for at least twenty rupees per month, which could be raised to thirty or forty rupees. I would like him to be paid forty rupees per month.'

'All right then, we will send you forty rupees every month,' said Mr. Basant Lal. Gandhiji said, looking at me, 'All right, you resume your work and keep me informed.'

I had nothing more to say. Gandhiji had fulfilled all my demands. When I started receiving forty rupees per month, I kept twenty rupees for myself and sent the rest to Puri, where I planned to open a new Hindi propagation centre.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Love at First Sight

Annapurna Maharana
Tr. Supriya Kar

Many people were afraid of donating to the fund, for Gandhi was considered an enemy of the government. To make matters worse, he was trying to abolish untouchability. We did our usual chores. We learnt Hindi from Pandit Anasuya Prasad. He had come to Orissa in 1931. Here he joined in the freedom movement and went to jail. After he got released from the jail, he dedicated himself to popularising Hindi in Orissa. A National Language Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Swami Bichitrananda Das. Ramadevi was its chief coordinator, collecting funds and enrolling students being her main responsibility. Panditji always said to us that, if a letter was written in a good hand, Gandhiji himself read that letter. He always prodded us to practise handwriting. So we worked hard at making our handwriting as beautiful as possible. Sri Gokula Shrichandan trained us to sing bhajans, and Gopal Ghosh taught us to play the violin.

Gandhiji came to Puri after completing his tour in Angul. But he found the railway station was swarming with policemen. When he entered the town, he found that, the managers of the Jagannath temple had closed its gates fearing Gandhi might bring harijans into the temple. He said, 'It is not possible to change one's heart in an atmosphere heavy with doubt and fear. I will tour through Orissa on foot like Shankar and Chaitanya did.' Once he made up his mind, nothing would deter him. For his historic foot march, preparations now began in Puri.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The news made us feel nervous when it reached us in Cuttack. By this time, people had come from Orilo, Khandaita and had flooded the Sunshine field. How could we show our face to those from whom we had collected funds for the welcome ceremony and for the donation to be given to Gandhi! We felt angry in our hearts with Gandhiji and the coordinators for changing the schedule at the last moment. It was too embarrassing for us and we could not understand how to break this news.

Ramadevi wrote from Puri, 'All of you come to Balakati, where Gandhi will camp. From there join in Gandhi's foot march. Seven of us were working in the Harijan colonies: Sushila, Mangala, Sobha, Godabari, Manika, Tulasi, and Annapurna. We immediately set off for Bhubaneswar carrying our bedrolls. Fifty years back, there were no bridges on rivers flowing between Cuttack and Bhubaneswar; so no buses plied to Bhubaneswar like they do now. We went to Bhubaneswar by train. From there, we walked down the old pilgrim route to Balkati. We found that the meeting was already over and everybody had retired to the camp. The 'camp' was no dak bungalow or a school building – it was simply the shade of an orchard. Who will shelter Gandhi, who was an enemy of the British government, in a dak bungalow or in a school? The foot marchers were busy making arrangements for the night in lantern light. Those who had come from far-off places just to hear Gandhi and set their eyes on him, and had failed to make it on time, had gathered to have a glimpse of Gandhi and were forcing themselves into the camp. The volunteers tried to control them to the best of their ability. This was going on when our group reached there. The moment Ramadevi saw us, she directed us to control the crowd. We, the volunteers, had been trained by Hindustan Seva Dal! I was dashing out to control the crowd, when I heard an old man calling out affectionately from behind in Hindi, 'Hey girl! Where are you running?' I understood Hindi. When I heard that, I turned back and saw Gandhi resting under a tree. A lantern burnt feebly near him. One English lady, wearing *khadi*, and

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

another person were busy doing something. I boastfully replied, 'To control the crowd.' He smiled and said, 'All right, go on.' In English there is a phrase, 'love at first sight.' This is precisely what happened at that instant. Two words and a smile—it seemed as if we knew each other for ages—Gandhi became our chosen friend, our most intimate, and most precious friend.

We went on foot march twice a day. Early in the morning, Gandhi would wake everyone up, beating his brass bowl with a spoon. His files, papers, tooth-stick, boiled water, glasses, would be kept near him at night so that he did not have to search for these and waste any time in doing so, and would have everything within reach. Sushila Pai had given the glass he used the name, 'Multi-Purpose.' He used this glass while brushing his teeth, taking bath, in the toilet, and also when he drank goat's milk. Susila Pai had suggested that, after Gandhi's death, this glass should be preserved in a museum, bearing a note on how it was used.

When we heard the wake-up call, we would get up and hurriedly go through our chores and prepare ourselves for the morning prayer. Baba Kalekar managed the prayer meeting. The prayer continued in this manner; first, *pratah smaramy*, which was then, followed by singing of devotional songs. After the prayer, the foot marchers would have breakfast, which the villagers offered. Carrying light essential things volunteers would prepare to go on the march, leaving the heavy things at the camp. We had for breakfast, rice flakes, molasses, curd, coconut and mangoes. The marchers who belonged to the native place had another responsibility: to throw all the used leaves in a pit, to dig latrines and to see if the cooking pots were kept in a proper place. Until the hour of the commencement of the march, Gandhiji would immerse himself in writing letters, or discussing something with others. Then suddenly he would look at his watch, check if his bag and the first-aid kit were ready, and without calling anyone would start walking as if he had a sixth sense helping him in telling him the time. When it was time to eat, he would look at his

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

watch, and the watch would show the exact time. Anyway, the moment Gandhiji started walking, we would follow him. If anyone remained behind due to absentmindedness or for some work, that day he would have to run, gasping for breath, because Gandhiji walked very fast, and sometimes, he ran if he thought it was necessary to do so. Usually, he would lay his hands on the shoulders of two persons, and walk on engaging them in a discussion. He acquainted himself with the people in the course of the walk. When Gandhi would start running, life became very difficult for the two persons he used as walking sticks.

The bedrolls of the foot marchers, the records of the mobile office of the Sevak Sangh, the typewriter – all these were carried on a cart to the next resting place. Once, a foot marcher from Bombay fell ill during the march. Gandhiji at once ordered that the person should travel on the cart. All others should carry their bedrolls. As we had been trained by the Seva Dal, we carried the bedrolls on our shoulders and got applauded by the Mahatma himself.

Love is a powerful force, as powerful as the gravitational pull. This love drew people from far and near to Gandhi. All along the way, crowds poured in. The moment they saw Gandhi, the air would resound with the sound of haribol and hulahuli. The villagers would join Gandhi on the way and march forward, singing. They were always careful that dust from their feet must not cover Gandhiji.

By the time we reached our resting point, people from far and near would gather there. So Gandhiji would start addressing them immediately. To get rid of a sin like untouchability, to get rid of laziness, to give up drinking alcohol, to remain clean – he would exhort them to do. He would persuade the womenfolk to give up jewellery and come out of purdah. At every meeting he would repeat that one who lived off others is no better than a thief. Gandhiji gave his speech in Hindi. Rajakrishna Bose translated it into Oriya. Whenever he was not available, Gopabandhu Choudhury would do the job. After the meeting, Gandhiji himself would ask for donations.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

People donated things, ranging from bamboo baskets to gold chains and bangles. Gandhiji himself would auction these. We too would circulate among the crowd and ask for donations, spreading our sari ends. People gave even an *adhala* or a *pahula*. Their faces shone while offering us these. Quantity did not matter. What mattered was how sincerely one gave.

When the meeting would be over, we would help in cutting vegetables, and rolling out chapatis. Then we would set out for the Harijan colonies nearby to collect information. To clean Harijan colonies, to bathe the Harijan children, and teaching them to sing *Ramdhun* were tasks we carried out. Professor Lala Achintarai, Krushna Menon, Baba Kalekar and other leaders, who had come from outside to Orissa, also accompanied us to Harijan colonies. Damodar Das Munjada, Debaraj and Prithwiraj assisted Thakkar Bapa in managing the office, typing, keeping accounts, replying to letters. Mira Behn and Susila Pai helped Gandhi in writing letters. Pravabati Devi, Jayprakash Narayan's wife, cooked for Gandhi, boiled goat milk and took care of other such things. Balaji Govindji Desai, besides writing articles for the weekly *Harijan*, also started reading *Niladri Mahoday* after learning Oriya from us to be able to read the history of Orissa. He was such a studious person that, he read books even while walking along a road. Uma, Jamunalal Bajaj's daughter, was the youngest, the fattest and the most mischievous of the marchers. Though she belonged to a rich family, she endured all the hardships of the Harijan march without complaint. In fact, the truth was, she enjoyed taking part in the march. Pandit Nilakantha Das, Gopabandhu Choudhury gave lectures on the floods and other such problems affecting Orissa to the guests who had come from outside. Uma Bajaj would take down notes and give these to Gandhi. On some days Gandhiji would make a speech, relying on these notes and those we took down during our visits to the Harijan quarters. Whenever he did so, our hearts would fill with pride. Gandhiji instinctively made those who did not matter feel valued. The foot

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

marchers included But Sahib from Germany. He was a Nazi. That's why Rajakrishna babu told him jokingly, 'Nazis are pazis (wicked men).'

The workers from Orissa were given a lot of responsibilities. Sri Gunanidhi Pattnaik and Sri Surendra Pattnaik were part of the advance party. They would go to the resting place to check if proper arrangements had been made. As the secretary of Harijan Sevak Sangh, Ramadevi remained in the overall charge of the foot march. Rajakrishna babu served as the translator, 'his master's voice.' Gopabandhu Choudhury apprised the guest of the situation in Orissa and coordinated the activities. Manmohana Choudhury and Binod Kanungo worked as reporters. Manmohan Choudhury also worked as the photographer. Jagannath Satpathy from Kujanga remained in charge of cooking and made sure cooking was finished on time. Iswarlal Byas was the bell-ringer. He would indicate time by beating a brass plate with a spoon. Sometimes Pandit Lingaraj Mishra, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Malati Choudhury, Radhanath Rath, Satyanarayan Sengupt came to meet Gandhiji. Agatha Harrisson had come from England and Pierre Serisol from Switzerland to be with Gandhiji. Minu Massani, Biyogi Hari, Satishchandra Dasgupta were among others who had come to Orissa to meet Gandhiji.

After lunch, and after taking rest for some time, the learned guests who had come from outside would addressed us. Biyogi Hari spoke on the history of Hindi Literature. Satishchandra Dasgupta talked on Harijans and their problems. Then we would set out for the next resting place. We would finish eating before sunset and start on our journey. On the way, people would gather, conchshells would be blown, and devotional songs would be sung. We would say our evening prayers after raching the resting place, and then the meeting would start. After the meeting, people would be asked to make donation. Then the foot marchers would make arrangements for spending the night at the resting place. Most of the days, we would stay on the banks of a river or in an open field at the outskirts of a village. Rarely did we stay at someone's house.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Glimpse of the Mahatma

Kashinath Nayak
Tr. Deepak Champatiray

It was 1934 when the Mahatma started his historic march from the lion gate of Lord Jaganath's temple to Bhadrak in Orissa.I felt a keen desire to see him.

I was quite thrilled when I heard that Gandhiji was scheduled to stay at the Ramdas mutt near Dandamukundapur after commencing his journey from Puri. I thought it would be foolish to miss such a golden opportunity. I told my mother of my intention and set off for the school hostel. All the boarders, especially Chintamani Panigrahi, became very happy when they saw me. We had lunch together.

When the marchers passed through Jaganath lane near our school, and moved towards Karan Sahi, some of the students including me joined them, too.

A vast crowd had gathered to have a glimpse of the Mahatma. A little later, the meeting started. Children like me sat in the front row. The air echoed with slogans when the Mahatma arrived. Everybody stood up to show respect to the great man. We too rose to our feet. On the way to the stage, Gandhiji waved his hands over our heads. I still remember how my heart overflowed with joy at the holy touch of the Mahatma. But, young and inexperienced as I was I could not make out what Gandhiji said at the meeting.

Mahatmaji was an angel and he had assumed human form to free our motherland from the British – I used to hear such things being said and I always longed to see this divine being. On that blissful day, I could not help staring at his face and attire with the keenest eagerness.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

The very next day, Gandhiji and his followers were to halt for a while at the Sadabrata mutt near Pipili and stay at Gudia Pokhari, which lay near our village. I, along with a few boys from villages Balakati and Balipatna made our way towards Gudia Pokhari and reached the place well before daybreak. I felt neither hungry nor tired, such was my zeal. The orchard called Kakharuapada had been tidied up to accomodate Gandhiji and his co-workers. We planned to spend the night there. On getting there we found Sadhu babu from Mukundpur. He was delighted to see us.

Sadhu babu was an eminent and honest Congressman. He used to drop in at our school regularly and enlightened us about the Mahatma and the freedom movement and about the importance of sanitation and spinning. When he ran into us in the orchard, he gave us rice flakes, molasses and shredded coconut to eat and told us to spend the night in the orchard.

The next day, when Gandhiji arrived, Sadhu babu along with other Congress workers stood on the road to receive him. The very next moment, the heart-warming and familiar slogans, 'Long live the Mahatma', 'Long live mother India' filled the air. I was waiting eagerly by the roadside, accompanied by my impatient friends. Gandhiji stood out in the ocean of humanity surrounding him.

As Mahatmaji was scheduled to stay there for a few days, a make-shift hut and a toilet had already been built for him. A few minutes of rest was followed by a spinning session. Mahtmaji and his followers took part in this. Gradually, people poured into the orchard. Even women came riding covered bullock carts to see the Mahatma. I considered myself extremely lucky to have had the divine *darshan* of Mahatma for the second time in a row.

The next resting point was the upper primary school at Balakati. Despite the intense desire to see him for a third time, I could not make it to Balakati. I returned home with a heavy heart.

As a matter of coincidence, later, I joined as a teacher at the same school at Balakati. I relished the opportunity of visiting the holy spot where Gandhiji had sat, day after day, every day for thirty-three long years.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Gandhiji's Blessings

Nilamani Rautray

Tr. Mary Mohanty

When I was at School in 1934, Gandhiji travelled by train to Cuttack through Bhadrak. Gandhiji always travelled in third class. That day, the Bhadrak station teemed with people eager to see him. I also went there. The atmosphere resounded with shouts of praise to Mahatma Gandhi. I wondered if I would be able to see Gandhiji in such a crowd. The crowd stood waiting on the platform. Volunteers urged everyone to desist from forcing their way into the compartment in which Gandhiji sat. They said that, after the train would halt Gandhiji would come to the door to enable the public to see him. It was my good luck that the third-class compartment in which Gandhiji sat stopped right in front of me. My mind suddenly went out of my control. I jumped in through the window. Gandhiji caught hold of me. He rebuked me affectionately, stroked my head once and made me get down from the train. On that day section 144 of IPC had been imposed on Bhadrak. A sahib named Butt marched with Gandhiji. He himself followed Nazism and was a supporter of Hittler. But he stayed with Gandhiji in order to study the ways of non-violent struggle. The nasty behaviour of the S.D.O enraged him. I learnt that he said that he would shoot the S.D.O dead if he came face to face with him.

A few days after this incident Mahatma Gandhi went on a padayatra from Puri to Bhadrak. This was his historic padayatra for the eradication of untouchability and for the unrestricted entry of harijans into Hindu temples. Gandhiji walked down the road. Many

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

renowned persons from various places in India and abroad accompanied him. In Bhadrak, Gandhiji stayed for a day at the Ashram set up by Sri Jibaramji Kalyanji on the banks of river Salindi near the old bazaar. I was very lucky to have been assigned the task of fanning Gandhiji with a palm-leaf fan. I looked upon this work as a good, holy and glorious deed in my life and fanned Gandhiji with great enthusiasm. Malali Mohammed Hanif, a renowned Congress leader of Bhadrak, was the president of the committee formed to felicitate Gandhiji. He had chosen me to do this job. I remember the arrogant behaviour on the part of the British officer, the S.D.O. at Bhadrak, Durgacharan Das. While Gandhi was walking down the road, he went riding a motor car which raised a lot of dust from the road. This act on his part made everyone sad and angry. I heard people saying that Gandhiji had never received this type of indecent behaviour from government servants anywhere in India.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Memories of Gandhi

Banka Bihari Das

Tr. Mary Mohanty

I got the opportunity to see and listen to Gandhiji on three occasions. I got all these chances when I was a young boy. I saw him for the first time in 1934 when he went on a padayatra in Orissa. In 1938, I saw and listened to him for the second time during the session of Sarva Seva Sangha held in the field near the Delang railway station. The third opportunity to listen to Gandhiji came in 1946, when he travelled to Madras through Orissa from Bolepour in West Bengal by a special train. In that train, I accompanied Nabakrushna Chaudhury as a representative of Orissa Congress committee from evening till morning. Each of these experiences has been indelibly etched in my mind. Gandhiji undertook his Harijan padayatra from Puri to Bhadrak from the fifth to the eighth of May in 1934. The main goal of this padayatra was to wipe out the discriminations based on untouchability from Indian society. Though it was an act of social reform, its chief aim was to bring people of all religions and all castes into the mainstream of the nationalist struggle. Gandhiji had also launched a movement against all types of superstitions like purdha.

He undertook this Harijana padayatra during the summer in the months of May and June. The route of his padayatra lay from Kendrapara across the river Birupa and through Kaipada and Bari. Gopabandhu Chudhury, a major Gandhian leader, had chosen Bari, which was an undeveloped and flood-prone area as his field of work. Similarly, Lal Bihari Pattnaik, who was my neighbour and like a

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

brother to me, had resigned from his job in the education department of the Madras government and served jail sentences. After coming out of jail, he made our village, Kalayanpur the centre of khadi-related work and other creative experiments. Our village was an important center of the freedom struggle. Lal Behari babu sent a letter to Gandhiji requesting him to pass through our village. The proposal touched the heart of Gandhiji. So he wrote to Gopabandhu Choudhury to reroute his padayatra through a village near Kalyanpur where he could meet the inhabitants of our village.

In response to Gandhiji's suggestion it was decided that he would halt at Amyaspur for some time on his way from Kalamatia to Bari and talk to the inhabitants of our village. When we came to know about this, almost all residents of our village, the young and the old, men, women, and children walked down to Amyaspur. I went there with my parents covering about six to seven kilometers through paddy fields and across river Kharashrota. At the time, I was aged nine and was studying in class four.

A staff in hand, Gandhiji reached the village along with his followers. He sat down on a cot covered with a white sheet. Lal Behari babu read out a citation in English on the problems of Harijanas on behalf of the villagers. The gist of what Gandhiji said in response to this was so touching that it still resounds in my ears. The youth leader, Rajkrushna Bose, translated into Oriya what Gandhiji had said in simple Hindi. Bose had earned a name as a good orator. After independence he became a powerful minister in Orissa.

In his brief lecture Gandhiji said that discriminations based on untouchability were despicable. Advising people to wipe these out completely, he said, 'Untouchability is a slur on Hindu society. It has no logical basis. Washermen are a low caste among Harijans. But even Brahmins cannot be purified unless a washerman washes their clothes. They can enter a temple and offer puja only if they wear clothes washed by washermen.' He also referred to the extreme

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

poverty of the the people of Orissa and advised them not to shrink from doing hard work. He added that only a race which works hard can prosper.

The instance of washermen given by Gandhiji left a deep impression on my mind. I can never forget those words. I sat by him on the cot and gazed unblinkingly at his face. How much of what he said could I understand at that tender age! Later, I went to him on behalf of our village. It so pleased Gandhiji that he published it in his magazine *The Harijan*.

The second opportunity to see him came in 1938, when he attended a session of Gandhi Seva Sangh held near the Delang railway station in Puri district. This session went on for four days from the twenty-eighth of March to the thirty-first. At the time, Congress had formed the ministry in Orissa under the leadership of Biswanath Das. I was studying in class ten at Collegiate School. A few students of the school came to Delang one evening and attended a public meeting. Generally speaking, Gandhiji's prayer meetings were also his public meetings. All the Gandhian leaders and workers of India had joined this annual conference. I do not now remember what Gandhiji had said at this meeting.

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Victory to Gandhiji

Surendra Mohanty
Tr. Jatindra K. Nayak

It was our last year at school. Teachers were taking extra classes to finish the course. For some of us staying at the school hostel, who were good students, arrangements had been made to give us regular coaching. Teachers and students alike were working very hard to ensure that the school did well at the Patna University examination.

I used to buy a copy of the Oriya newspaper, *The Samaj*, from the bus stand every day. As a matter of fact, reading the newspaper was part of my daily academic routine. As a result, I always secured the highest marks in general knowledge and debating. One day, I learnt from *The Samaj* that the Sarva Seva Sangha was going to hold a conference at Delang Berboi, which would be attended by Mahatma Gandhi and other important Congress leaders. In no time the news spread everywhere: 'The Mahatma will come to Orissa, the Mahatma will come to Orissa.'

I went to our Superientendent, Manmohan babu, and said, 'I want to see Mahatma Gandhi. Please allow me leave.' He said no. One day, early in the morning, I boarded a bus at the bus stand at Salipur and came to Jagatpur, not caring for the consequences of my action. I had only two rupees in my pocket. At Jagatpur railway station I met two other students from our school. They enquired if I was on my way to Delang. I said yes. They informed me that a special train would leave Cuttack for Delang at midday. We walked across the sands of river Mahanadi, and took the ferry at the Jobra pier and arrived at Cuttack railway station. We did not buy tickets for travelling

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

in the special train. At any rate, no ticket inspector came in to check if we had tickets – may be they stayed away out of respect for the Mahatma. When the train pulled out of the station, the air resounded with the cry 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi.' At every station the train stopped, we shouted from inside the carriage, 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi.' The passengers waiting on the platform responded by raising the slogan, 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi.'

This showed how the very name of Mahatma Gandhi inspired and excited the masses of ordinary people in India at the time.

The train reached Delang in the afternoon. There I saw that hundreds of huts made of coconut branches had been built outside the station. Their floors were made up of straw. The delegates stayed in these huts, spreading their bedsheets on the floor. We were told that Mahatma Gandhi would presently appear before the people assembled there. We forgot all about taking our food, and rushed to the place where Mahatma Gandhi was to speak to everyone. A field lay a short distance away from the camp. It was surrounded by screwpine bushes. The field had already been packed with women, young and old, who had come from the villages. There were very few men among the audience. The women, the end border of their sarees pulled over their faces, waited silently for the Mahatma, like shadows. The volunteers did not allow us to go into this crowd of women. We stood by the screwpine bushes, waiting for the Mahatma.

A dais consisting of a chair set on a four-poster had been erected for the Mahatma. When he arrived, the men shouted 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi' and 'Haribol'. The women ulullated. The noise they made took a long time to die down. Then Gandhiji raised his right hand slightly in the attitude of blessing the people, and gave a speech. What he said no one seemed to understand. But who had come to listen to his speech, anyway? The village women, one tying the end border of her saree to that of another, who had assembled there, the daily labourer who had come there foregoing a day's wage, the peasants who had rushed in there, neglecting their fields would

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

make little sense of Gandhi's speech. They had all come only for a glimpse of the Mahatma. To have set their eyes on him for once was what mattered most to them. This was all that the Mahatma's speech meant to them.

As I stood there, I remembered another incident. I cannot recall the exact year in which it took place. I was then a student of the Metcalf Middle School at Kanpur. Gandhiji had come to the village of Jiginipatapur, which was under Salipur police station. Jiginipatpur lay at a distance of six to seven miles from Raisunguda. My mother, on hearing that Gandhiji was coming, was insistent that she must go to see him. Father closed his dispensary for that day. As far as I can remember, it was a summer morning. My mother and a few other women set out for Jiginipatpur in a hired bullock cart. Father, an umbrella in hand, walked in front of the cart. I ran along, kicking up a little cloud of dust. But I could not see Gandhi on that day. My mother and other women did. On my way back, I asked her, 'What did Gandhi say to you?' My father, like me, had not been able to see Gandhi. So mother was full of a sense of self-importance, for only she in our whole family had had the good fortune of having set her eyes on Gandhi. She replied, gravely, 'What could he say? All he had to say was, 'Spin thread, and hand all your jewellery to me.' He had nothing else to say. His body glowed like a thin gold stick.' She would have gone on and on in this vein, but I interrupted her, saying, 'What ornaments did you give him?' She made a face and said, 'Why should I give him my ornaments? I paid my respects to him, making him an offering of a silver coin.'

That day, at Berboi, the same thing was happening again. The village women, who had poured into that place riding bullock carts or walking, felt no need for listening to Gandhi's speech. One glimpse of Gandhi was all that mattered to them. This kind of mesmeric effect on the masses of India, which Gandhi exercised, was – and will be – beyond any other leader. From the point of view of millions in India at that time, Gandhi was truly an incarnation. It amazes one when

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

one thinks of the way he managed to invest a political and economic programme with a religious significance.

We left Delang the next day in the morning. When I arrived in Cuttack, I found that I was left with only a four-anna coin. With this I could not have paid for my bus fare to Salipur. So we decided to cover the distance from Jagatpur to Salipur by foot. By the time we came to Padmapur, we were so worn out that our feet refused to move. We slept on a cement platform under a banyan tree, which stood in the bazar of Padmapur. Our fatigue had made us forget our hunger. When we reached our hostel the next day, I found that my feet had swollen up like a loaf of bread.

Manmohan babu asked me, 'Did you get to see Mahatma Gandhi?'

I smiled and said, 'Yes, Sir.'

* * *

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Note on Authors

Annapurna Maharana (b. 1917)'s autobiography *Amruta Anubhav* was brought out by Sikshasandhan, Bhubaneswar in 2005. She is an eminent freedom fighter and social worker.

Anusaya Prasad Pathak (1913-1970) devoted his life to the spread of Hindi in Orissa through Rastra Bhasa Prachar Samiti. The excerpt has been taken from his autobiography, *Mera Utkal Prabas*.

Artabandhu Mohanty (1905-1989) was a schoolteacher and a social worker. His unfinished autobiography appeared in *Artabandhu Smarane* published by Gramsevak Samabaya Press Ltd, Cuttack in 1990

Banchhanidhi Pattnaik (1901-1988) was a poet and social worker. His autobiography *Mo Katha* was published by Pujyapuja Orissa, Bhubaneswar in 1988.

Banka Bihari Das (1923–2001) was a renowned socialist leader. He was Minister, Finance and Minister, Revenue in Government of Orissa. His autobiography *Sangramara Sesha Nahin* was published by Ramesh Chandra Swain, Bhubaneswar in 1998.

Basanta Kumar Satpathy (1913-1994) is an eminent short story writer of Orissa. His autobiography, *Manepade*, is due to appear later this year.

Binod Kanungo (1912-1990) was well-known encyclopaedist and writer of children's literature. His autobiography *Patha Pachhe Pachhe Apathua* was published by Basundhara Prakashani in 1987.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Chintamani Mishra (1906 –1980), the founder-editor of *Utkal Prasanga* and *Orissa Review*, was the first secretary of Information and Public Relations department, Government of Orissa after independence. He was also the editor of a literary journal *Nabajiban*. The extract is from his autobiography *Ardhasatabdira Anubhuti* vol. I published by Nabjiban Pustakalay, Cuttack in 1983.

Frieda Hauswirth (1886-1974) was a painter, writer, and illustrator. She was born in Switzerland. At Berkeley she met Sarangdhar Das, a student from India, and they married and moved to Orissa. Her publications include *A Marriage to India*, *Leaphome and Gentlebrawn* and *Into the Sun*.

Gobinda Chandra Mishra (1890-1967)'s autobiography *Jatiya Jibanara Atmabikash* (1940) is available in *Gobinda Chandra Rachhana Samagra* brought out by Arya Prakasani, Cuttack

Hari Charan Giri (1903- 1995)'s autobiography *Mo Jibana Kahani* was published by the author at Pipli in 1983.

Kashinath Nayak (b.1919) was a teacher. He has written several books for children. His autobiography, *Sikshakara Jibansmruti* was brought out by Sikshasandhan in 2005.

Krushna Chandra Kar (1906 – 1995) was a lexicographer and a writer for children. His autobiography *Hajila Dinara Smruti* was published by Grantha Mandir, Cuttack in1991.

Manmohan Choudhuri (1905-2003) was a reputed Bhoodan worker and distinguished thinker and a writer of eminence. His autobiography, *Kasturi Mruga Sama*, first serialized in *Ekabinsha Satabdi*, was brought out in book form by Kahani Prakashani in 1995.

Mirabehn (1892-1982). Born Madeleine Slade was a British woman who left her home in England to live and work under Mahatma Gandhi. She devoted her life to the advancement of Gandhi's

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

principles and the freedom struggle in India. The excerpt included in this volume is taken from D.G. Tendulkar's biography of Gandhi.

Narayan Birabara Samant (1900-1999) was an eminent freedom fighter and political leader.

Nilamani Routray (1920-2004) was a distinguished political leader, who was chief Minister, Orissa (1977-80) and a minister in the union Cabinet. His autobiography, *Smruti o Anubhuti* (1986) was published by Grantha Mandir, Cuttack in 2001.

Ramadevi Choudhuri (1899 –1985) was a distinguished freedom fighter and social worker, whose autobiography *Jibana Pathe* was brought out by Grantha Mandir in 1984. It has been translated into English by her illustrious son, Manmohan Choudhuri.

Soilabala Das (1875-1968) worked for spreading women's education in Orissa.

Sarala Devi (1904-1986) was an eminent freedom fighter and author.

Sridhar Das (1901-1988) was an eminent educationist, a noted lexicographer and translator.

Surendra Mohanty (1920–1992) was an eminent writer and a distinguished parliamentarian. His autobiography, *Patha o Pruthibi* was brought out by Eastern Media, Bhuaneswar in 1986.

Udaynath Sadangi (1905 -1999) was a noted journalist. His autobiography *Gandhi Maharajanka Sishya* was brought out by Orissa Book Store in 1984.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

A Note on Translators

Akhtar J. Khan teaches English at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

Arun Mohanty is a member of Orissa Education Service.

Bharati Mohapatra is a research scholar.

Deepak Champatiray studies at College of Engineering and Technology, Bhubaneswar.

Jatindra K. Nayak teaches English at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

Manmohan Choudhury was a freedom fighter, a distinguished Gandhian and an eminent writer.

Mary Mohanty teaches English at Government Women's College, Puri.

Prajna Paramita Panigrahi is a faculty at the Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

Prasanta K. Rath retired as an executive engineer.

Priyambada Pal teaches English at Silicon Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar. She is a translator and painter.

Sachidananda Mohanty teaches English at the Central University, Hyderabad.

Sujit Mahapatra is a critic and translator. He is the Member-Secretary, Bakul Foundation

Sumanyu Satpathy teaches English at Delhi University.

Supriya Kar works at Rupantar: A Centre for Translation.

Zehara Jabeen teaches English at Christ College, Cuttack.

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

READ MORE IN RUPANTAR

Chhamana Athaguntha: A Plot of Land: English translation of Fakir Mohan Senapati's classic Oriya novel
Translator: Jatindra K. Nayak

Sketches of Orissa: English translation of a Bangla novel published in 1903
Translator: Himansu S. Sarkar

Sumani Speaks: Autobiography of a tribal leader
Translator: Supriya Kar

Alms and Other Stories: English translation of selected short stories by Dash Benhur
Translator: Ashok Mohanty

Unforgettable Stories: English translation of stories for children by Dash Benhur
Translator: Priyambada Pal

The World Within: English translation of Baishnab Charan Das's classic Oriya novel, *Mane Mane*
Translator: Snehaprava Das

The Maternal Uncle: English translation of Fakir Mohan Senapati's Oriya novel *Mamu*
Translator: Jatindra K. Nayak

Two Plays: English translation of two Oriya plays by Pranabandhu Kar
Translator: Sujit Mahapatra

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA

Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa on as many as seven occasions. In fact, his celebrated journey on foot for the cause of Harijans started from Orissa. During his tours through the province, he attracted very large crowds and established a direct contact with the people and the landscape. He left an indelible impression on the minds of thousands of ordinary people who travelled long distances just to have a glimpse of him.

This book brings together personal narratives written by people who came in contact with Gandhi during his tours of Orissa. These narratives reveal his impish humour, his almost fanatic attention to detail, and his deep feeling for the poor and the dispossessed.

Jatindra K. Nayak teaches English at Utkal University. He won the Hutch-Crossword Indian Language Fiction Translation award in 2004.

Rs 195.00

ISBN 81-901759-7-1

Digitized by PPRACHIN, SOA